

MAHABHARATA-1

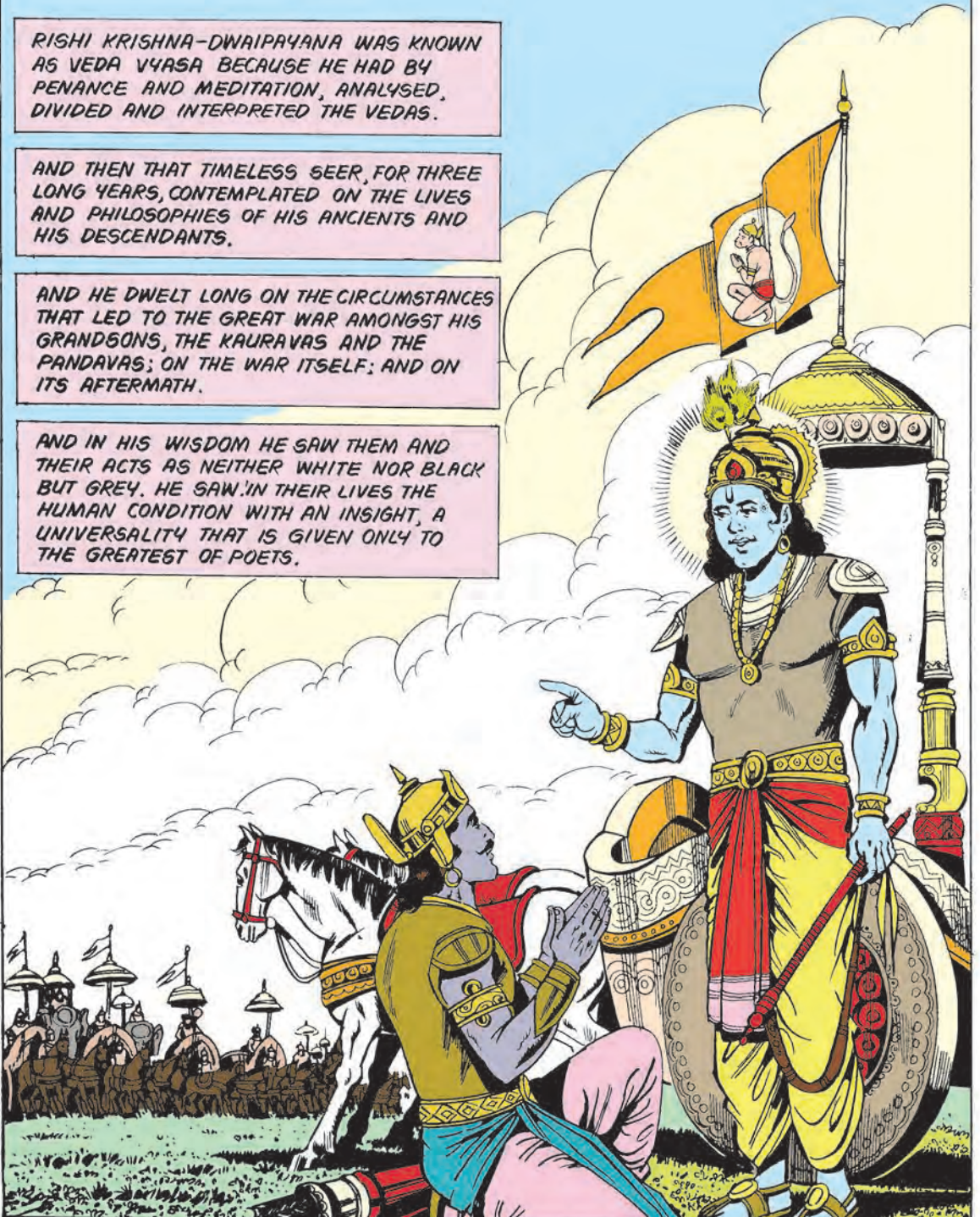
VEDA VYASA

RISHI KRISHNA-DWAIPAYANA WAS KNOWN AS VEDA VYASA BECAUSE HE HAD BY PENANCE AND MEDITATION, ANALYSED, DIVIDED AND INTERPRETED THE VEDAS.

AND THEN THAT TIMELESS SEER, FOR THREE LONG YEARS, CONTEMPLATED ON THE LIVES AND PHILOSOPHIES OF HIS ANCIENTS AND HIS DESCENDANTS.

AND HE DWELT LONG ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LED TO THE GREAT WAR AMONGST HIS GRANDSONS, THE KAURAVAS AND THE PANDAVAS; ON THE WAR ITSELF; AND ON ITS AFTERMATH.

AND IN HIS WISDOM HE SAW THEM AND THEIR ACTS AS NEITHER WHITE NOR BLACK BUT GREY. HE SAW IN THEIR LIVES THE HUMAN CONDITION WITH AN INSIGHT, A UNIVERSALITY THAT IS GIVEN ONLY TO THE GREATEST OF POETS.



AND THEN AS HE BEGAN TO PONDER ON HOW HE SHOULD RECORD WHAT HE SAW FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND, BRAHMA, THE CREATOR, CAME TO HIM.



O DIVINE BRAHMA, I HAVE COMPOSED A POEM BUT I CANNOT THINK OF ANY SCRIBE WHO WILL BE ABLE TO TAKE IT DOWN.

YOU CALL THE WORK A POEM, O MUNI. SO IT SHALL BE A POEM.



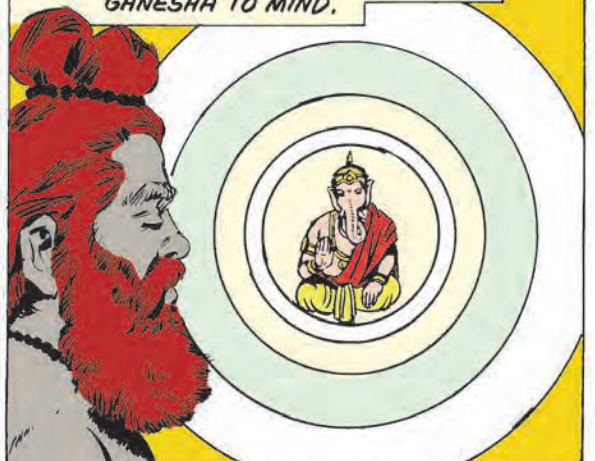
THERE SHALL HOWEVER BE NO POET WHOSE WORK WILL SURPASS THIS ONE.



THEREFORE, O MUNI, LET GANESHA BE THE SCRIBE.

AND BRAHMA RETIRED TO HIS ABODE.

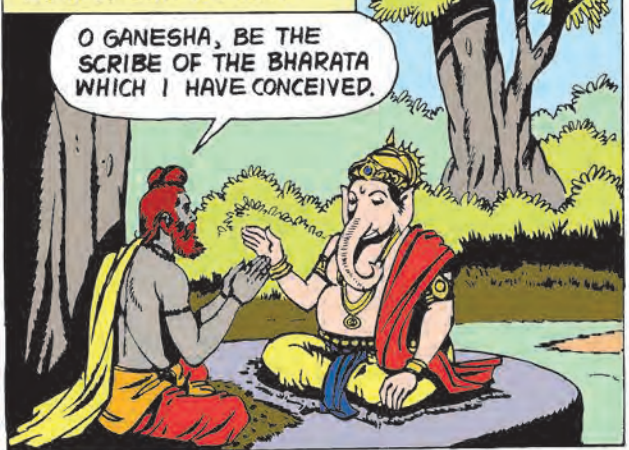
VYASA CLOSED HIS EYES AND CALLED GANESHA TO MIND.



NO SOONER WAS THAT REMOVER OF OBSTACLES THOUGHT OF THAN HE WAS THERE.

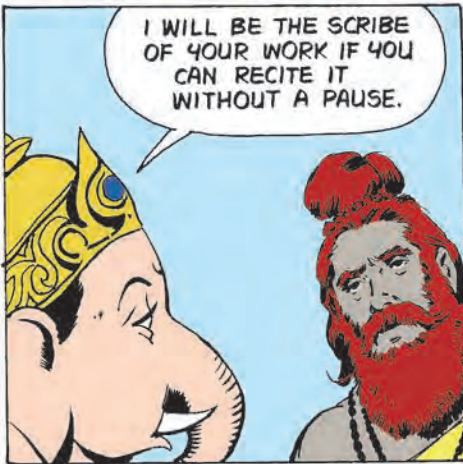


VYASA PAID OBEISANCE TO HIM AND WAITED TILL HE WAS SEATED. THEN—

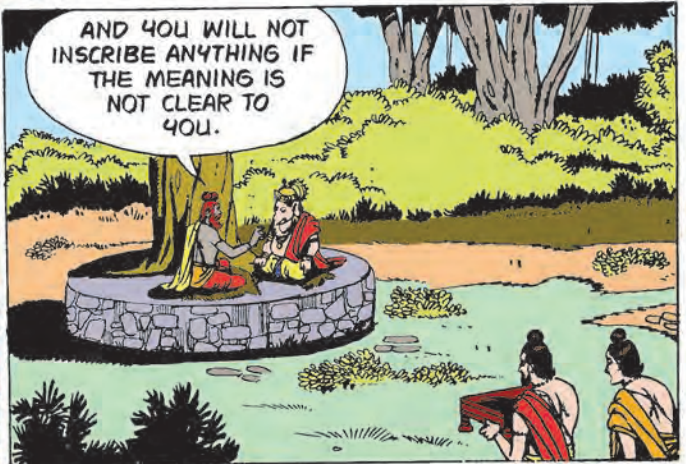


O GANESHA, BE THE SCRIBE OF THE BHARATA WHICH I HAVE CONCEIVED.

I WILL BE THE SCRIBE OF YOUR WORK IF YOU CAN RECITE IT WITHOUT A PAUSE.



AND YOU WILL NOT INSCRIBE ANYTHING IF THE MEANING IS NOT CLEAR TO YOU.



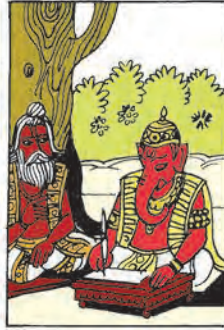
GANESHA HAVING NODDED HIS ASSENT, VYASA BEGAN WITH THE INVOCATION.

OM! HAVING INVOKED THE GRACE OF NARAYANA AND NARA AND SARASWATI, MUST THE WORD JAYA* BE UTTERED.



* LITERALLY 'VICTORY.' MAHABHARATA WAS ALSO REFERRED TO AS JAYA

AND VYASA CONTINUED TO RECITE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PACT BY TURNING OUT PORTIONS THAT WERE COMPLEX AND PROFOUND.



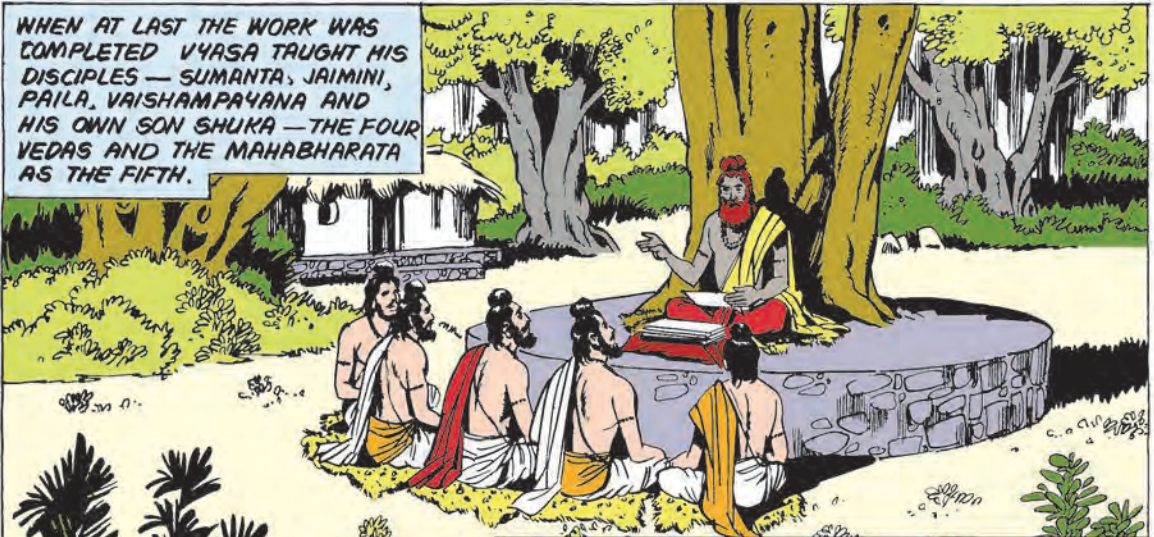
EVEN THE OMNISCIENT GANESHA HAD TO STOP OCCASIONALLY TO GRASP THOSE PORTIONS WHILE VYASA WENT ON WITH OTHER VERSES IN THEIR HUNDREDS.



TO THIS DAY NO ONE IS ABLE TO PENETRATE THE MEANING OF THOSE CLOSELY KNIT VERSES, SO MYSTERIOUS IS THEIR IMPORT.

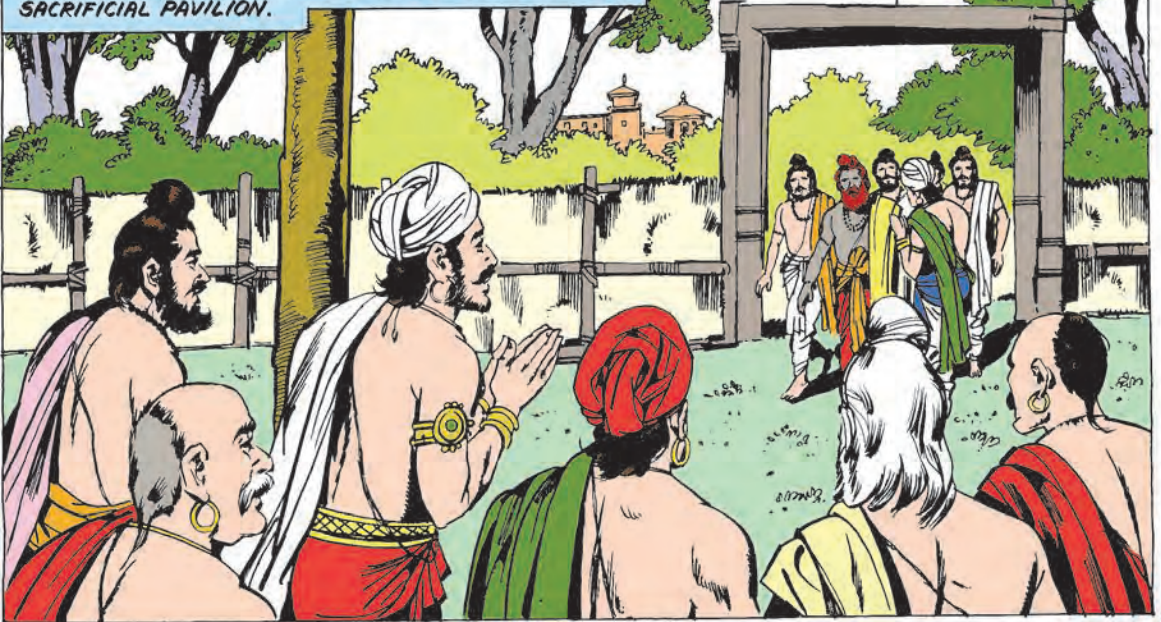


WHEN AT LAST THE WORK WAS COMPLETED VYASA TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES — SUMANTA, JAIMINI, PAILA, VAISHAMPAYANA AND HIS OWN SON SHUKA — THE FOUR VEDAS AND THE MAHABHARATA AS THE FIFTH.



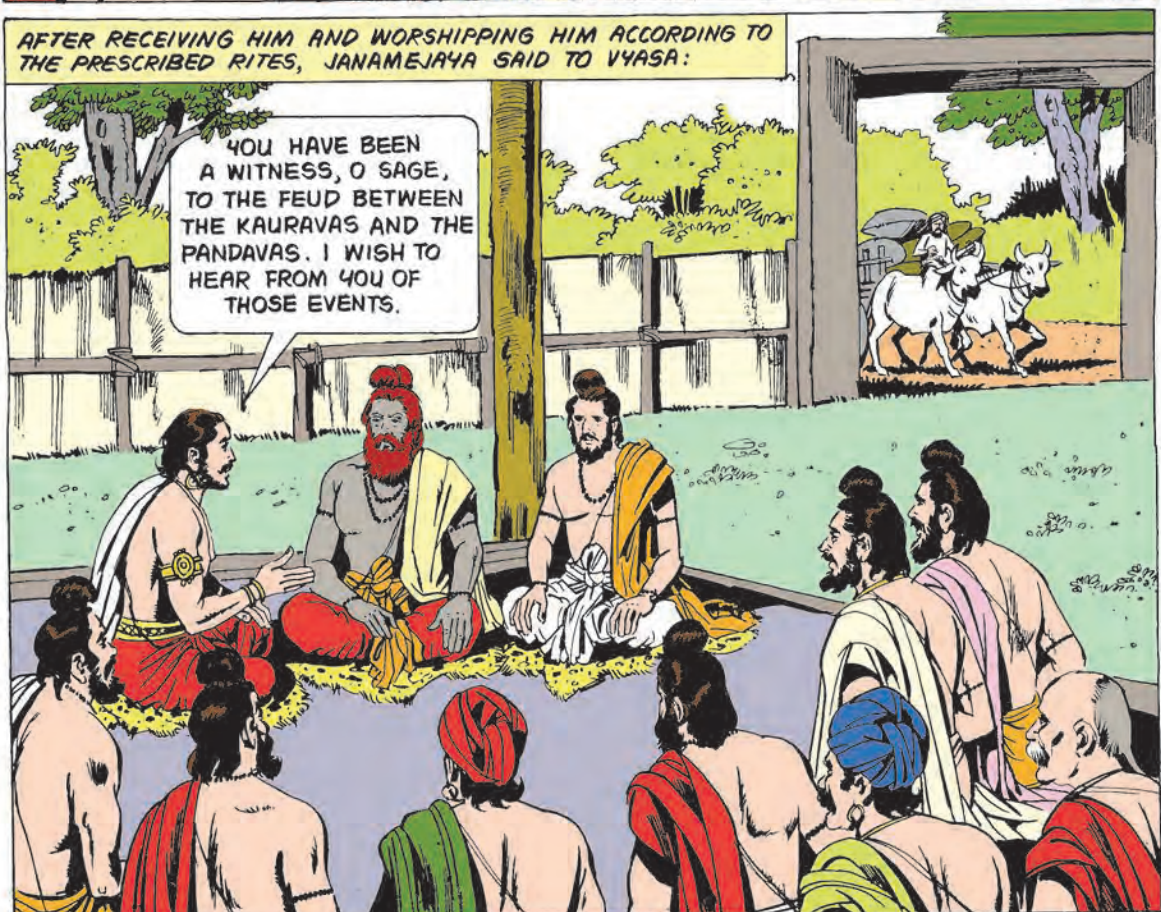
BUT ONLY AFTER THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF HIS WORK HAD DEPARTED FROM THE EARTH, DID HE PERMIT THEIR STORY TO BE RECITED IN PUBLIC. AND THIS IS HOW IT CAME TO PASS.

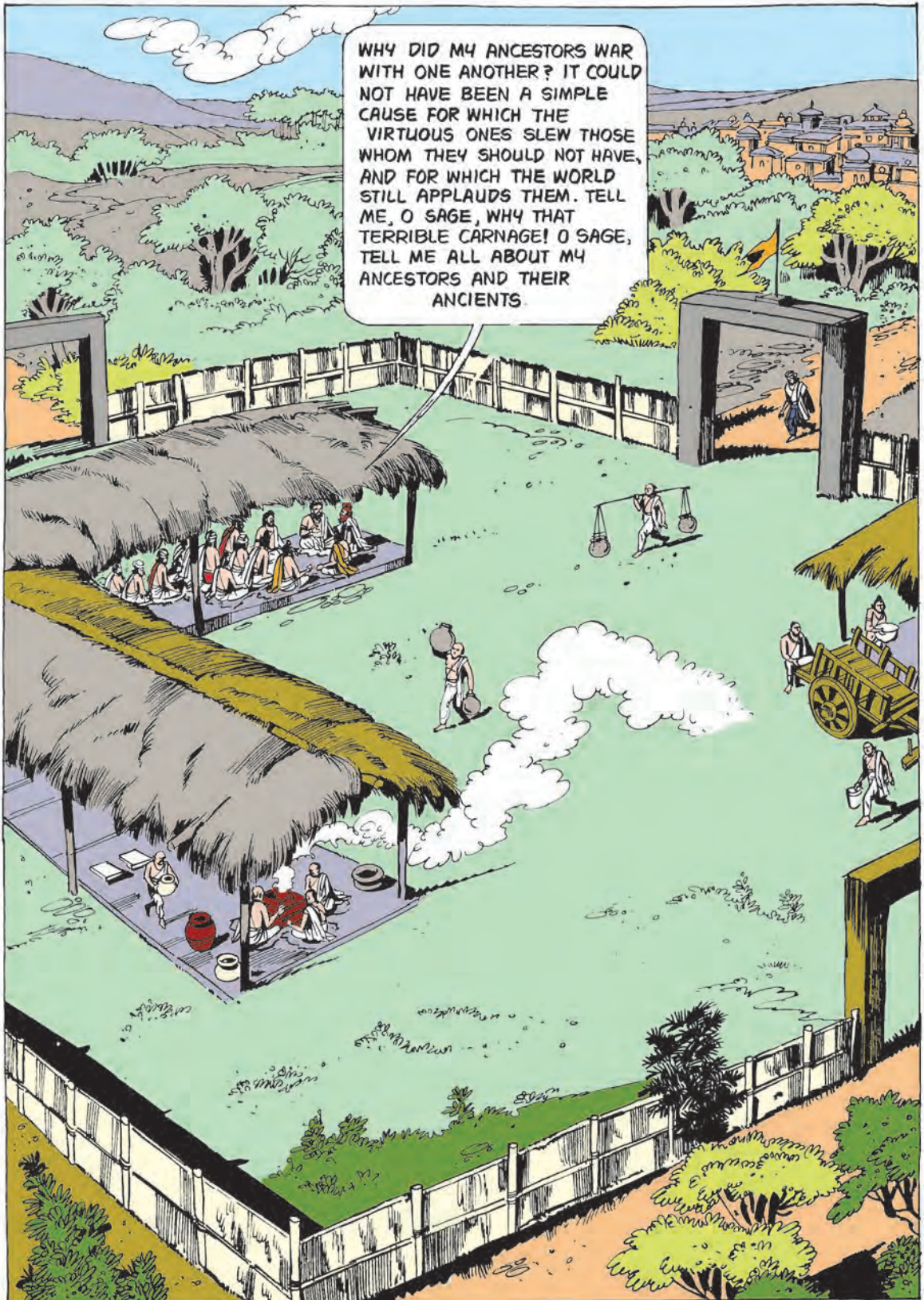
LEARNING THAT JANAMEJAYA, HIS GRANDSON'S GREAT-GRANDSON, WAS INSTALLED FOR THE SARPA SATRA*, VYASA WITH HIS DISCIPLES CAME TO THE SACRIFICIAL PAVILION.

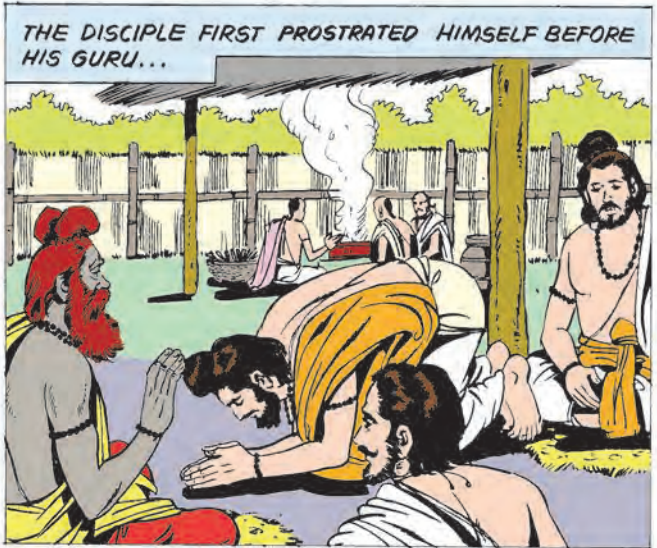
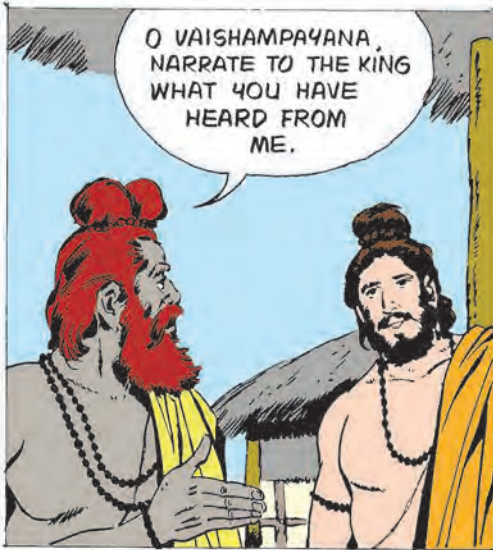


AFTER RECEIVING HIM AND WORSHIPPING HIM ACCORDING TO THE PRESCRIBED RITES, JANAMEJAYA SAID TO VYASA:

YOU HAVE BEEN A WITNESS, O SAGE, TO THE FEUD BETWEEN THE KAURAVAS AND THE PANDAVAS. I WISH TO HEAR FROM YOU OF THOSE EVENTS.

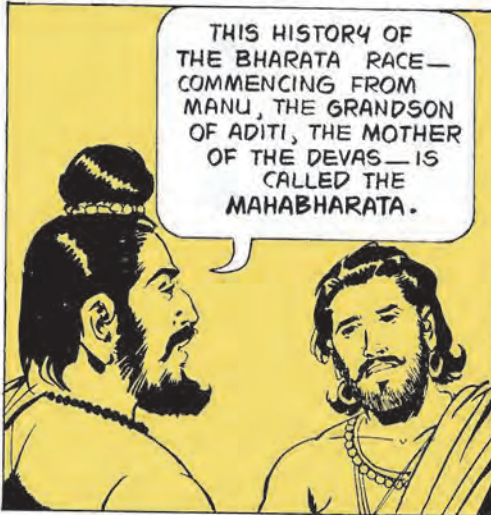




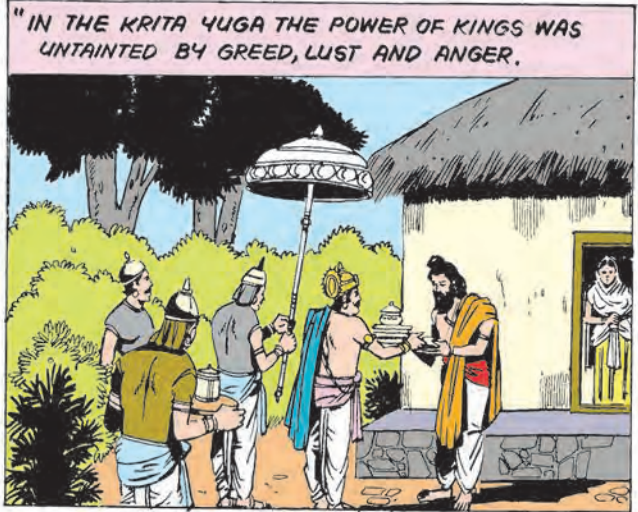


...AND THEN ADDRESSED THE KING.

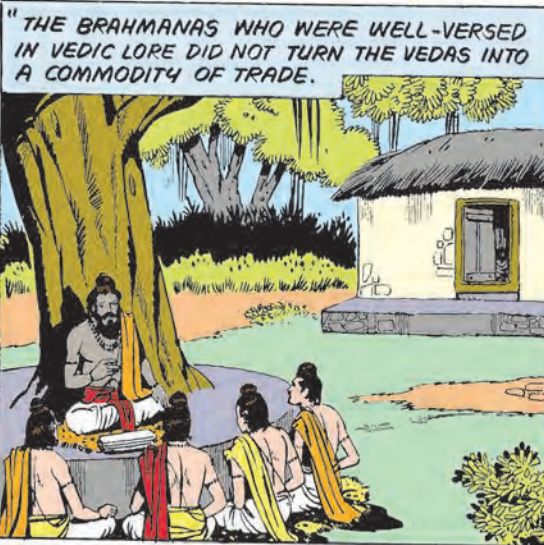




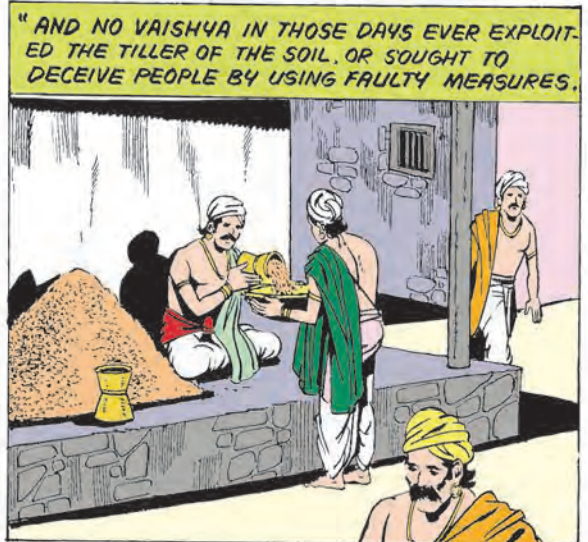
THIS HISTORY OF THE BHARATA RACE—COMMENCING FROM MANU, THE GRANDSON OF ADITI, THE MOTHER OF THE DEVAS—IS CALLED THE MAHABHARATA.



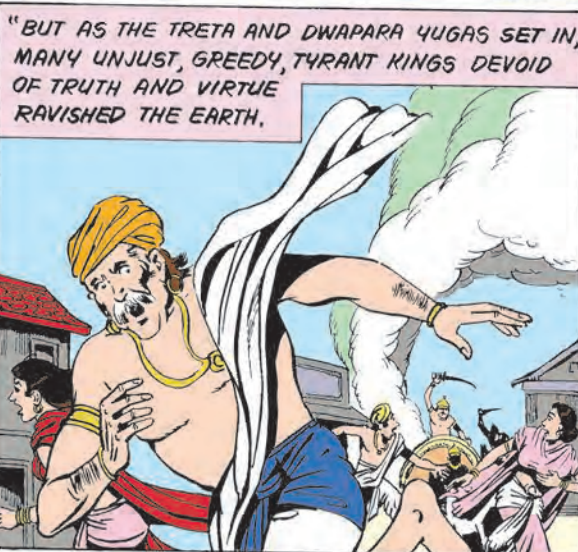
"IN THE KRITA YUGA THE POWER OF KINGS WAS UNTAINTED BY GREED, LUST AND ANGER.



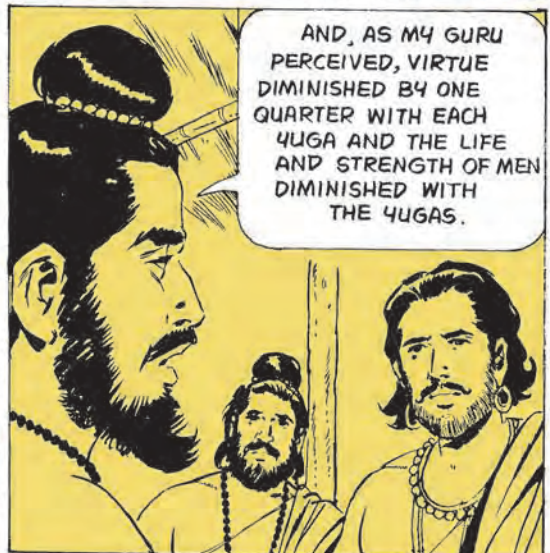
"THE BRAHMANAS WHO WERE WELL-VERSED IN VEDIC LORE DID NOT TURN THE VEDAS INTO A COMMODITY OF TRADE.



"AND NO VAISHYA IN THOSE DAYS EVER EXPLOITED THE TILLER OF THE SOIL, OR SOUGHT TO DECEIVE PEOPLE BY USING FAULTY MEASURES.



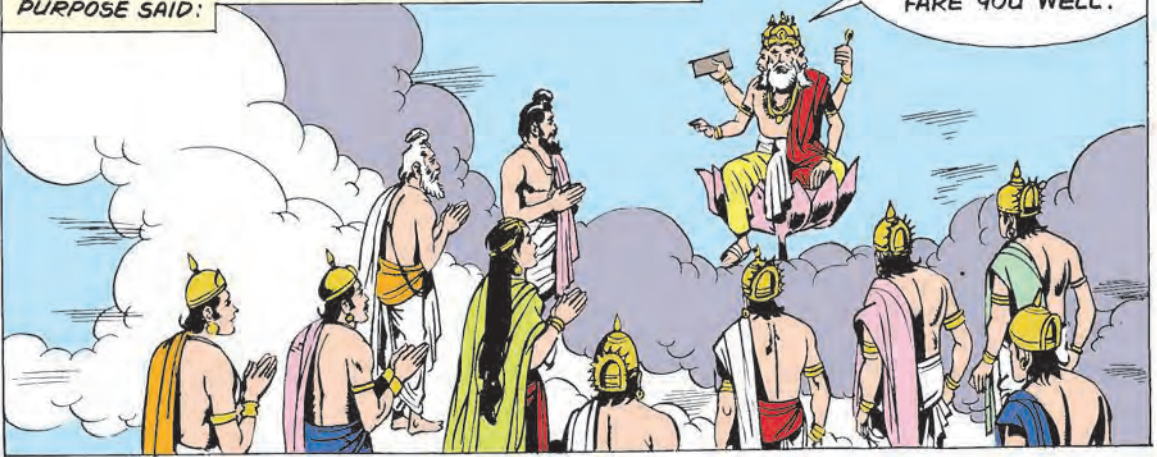
"BUT AS THE TRETA AND DWAPARA YUGAS SET IN, MANY UNJUST, GREEDY, TYRANT KINGS DEVOID OF TRUTH AND VIRTUE RAVISHED THE EARTH.



AND, AS MY GURU PERCEIVED, VIRTUE DIMINISHED BY ONE QUARTER WITH EACH YUGA AND THE LIFE AND STRENGTH OF MEN DIMINISHED WITH THE YUGAS.

"AND THEN, O MONARCH, BHOOMI DEVI, OPPRESSED BY THE RISE OF THE WICKED, CALLED TO MIND BRAHMA, THE GRANDSIRE OF ALL CREATURES, WHO DIVINING HER PURPOSE SAID:

I SHALL APPOINT THE CELESTIALS TO EASE YOUR BURDEN. FARE YOU WELL.



"THE CREATOR THEN SAID TO THE DEVAS, APSARAS AND GANDHARVAS:

GO TAKE BIRTH IN THE RACE OF MEN, IN YOUR RESPECTIVE ROLES IN FORMS OF YOUR CHOICE, AND SEEK STRIFE WITH THE WICKED ON EARTH.



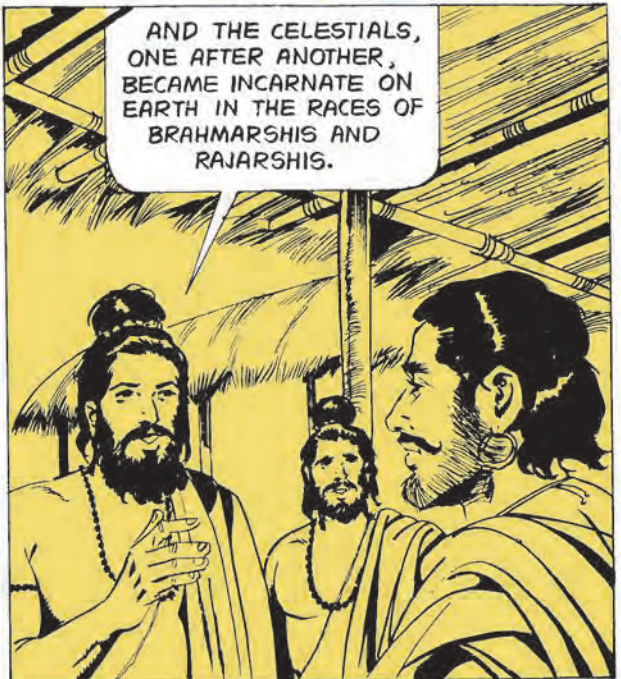
"AND THE DEVAS WENT TO NARAYANA AT VAIKUNTHA AND SAID:

BE INCARNATE!

LET IT BE SO.



AND THE CELESTIALS, ONE AFTER ANOTHER, BECAME INCARNATE ON EARTH IN THE RACES OF BRAHMARSHIS AND RAJARSHIS.



AND THIS, O MONARCH, IS AN ACCOUNT OF YOUR OWN RACE COMMENCING FROM MANU THE GRANDSON OF ADITI.

MANU'S DAUGHTER ILA BEGOT PURURAVAS WHOSE SON AYUS BEGOT NAHUSHA, THE FATHER OF YAYATI. THE YADAVAS AND THE PAURAVAS ARE THE DESCENDANTS OF YAYATI'S SONS, YADU AND PURU.

AND IN PURU'S LINE AFTER SEVENTEEN GENERATIONS OF KINGS, WAS BORN THE MIGHTY BHARATA THE SON OF DUSHYANTA.



"KING DUSHYANTA WANTING TO MEET SAGE KANWA, ONCE ARRIVED AT HIS ASHRAMA ALL ALONE. THE RISHI WAS NOT THERE BUT SHAKUNTALA*, HIS FOSTER-DAUGHTER, RECEIVED THE KING WITH HONOUR. ENCHANTED BY HER GRACE AND BEAUTY, THE KING SAID:

OH BEAUTIFUL ONE, BE MY WIFE.

O KING, LET MY FATHER WHO HAS GONE OUT RETURN AND BESTOW ME ON YOU.



*KALIDASA'S ADAPTATION OF THE STORY OF SHAKUNTALA DIFFERS FROM THE ORIGINAL MAHABHARATA VERSION.

"ON HEARING THESE WORDS, THE KING SAID:

O FAULTLESS ONE,
YOU NEED NO SANCTION
BUT YOUR OWN. WED ME
NOW BY THE GANDHARVA
FORM. IT HAS THE
APPROVAL OF THE
LEARNED.

IF THIS FORM
OF UNION IS PROPER
AND IF IT NEEDS NO
SANCTION BUT MINE,
THEN PROMISE TO MAKE
THE SON BORN OF OUR
UNION YOUR
HEIR - APPARENT.

IF YOU CAN
PROMISE ME THIS,
LET OUR UNION
TAKE PLACE.

I PROMISE!
AND I WILL
TAKE YOU WITH
ME TO MY
CAPITAL.

"AND DUSHYANTA WED HER AND KNEW HER AS A
HUSBAND. THEN, PROMISING TO SEND HIS TROOPS TO
ESCORT HER TO THE CAPITAL, HE WENT AWAY THINKING:

WHAT WILL SAGE
KANWA'S REACTION
BE IF HE COMES
TO KNOW?

"THE SAGE RETURNED TO THE ASHRAMA
AS SOON AS THE KING LEFT. BY HIS
ASCETIC POWER, HE KNEW ALL AND WAS
PLEASED. HE SAID:

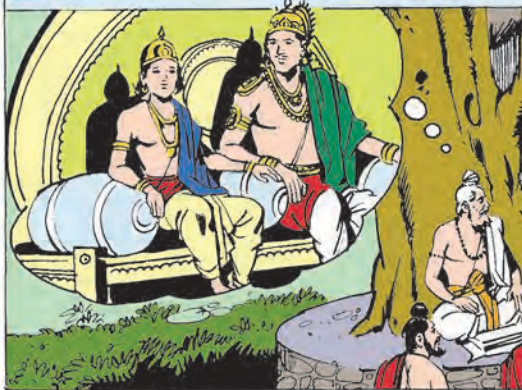
THE SON BORN
TO YOU SHALL BE
MIGHTY AND
ILLUSTRIOUS.

"AND IN TIME, SHAKUNTALA BROUGHT FORTH A
SON OF EXTRAORDINARY STRENGTH.

"AND WHEN HE WAS BARELY SIX, THE BOY WOULD CHASE AND SEIZE TIGERS..."



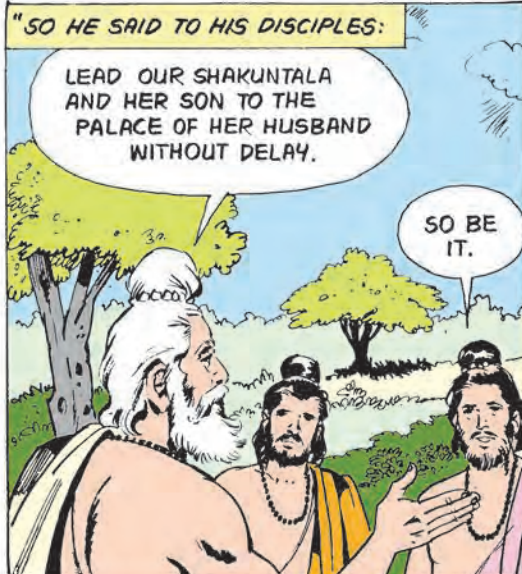
... AND RIDE ON THEM, AND WATCHING THESE FEATS, THE SAGE KNEW THAT THE TIME HAD COME FOR THE BOY TO TAKE HIS PLACE AS THE PRINCE AMONG MEN.



"SO HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES:

LEAD OUR SHAKUNTALA
AND HER SON TO THE
PALACE OF HER HUSBAND
WITHOUT DELAY.

SO BE
IT.



"AND THE RISHI'S DISCIPLES WITH SHAKUNTALA
AND HER SON, WENDED THEIR WAY TO
DUSHYANTA'S CAPITAL.



"WHEN THEY REACHED THE PRESENCE OF THE KING, THEY LEFT SHAKUNTALA WITH HIM AND WENT AWAY, PRESENTING HER SON, SHAKUNTALA SAID:

THIS IS YOUR SON, O KING.
FULFIL THE PROMISE YOU
GAVE ME TO INSTALL HIM AS
YOUR HEIR-APPARENT.



"BUT THE KING, THOUGH HE REMEMBERED EVERYTHING, SAID:

WHO ARE
YOU?

YOU HAD
APPROACHED ME,
O KING, WHEN
I WAS UNDER THE
PROTECTION OF MY
FATHER, SAGE
KANWA.



"THE KING REPLIED:

ARE YOU NOT
ASHAMED TO SPEAK
THUS TO ME, O WOMAN
IN THE GARB OF AN
ASCETIC?



"ON HEARING THESE WORDS, SHAKUNTALA'S EYES BLAZED AND HER LIPS QUIVERED IN ANGER. AND SHE SAID:

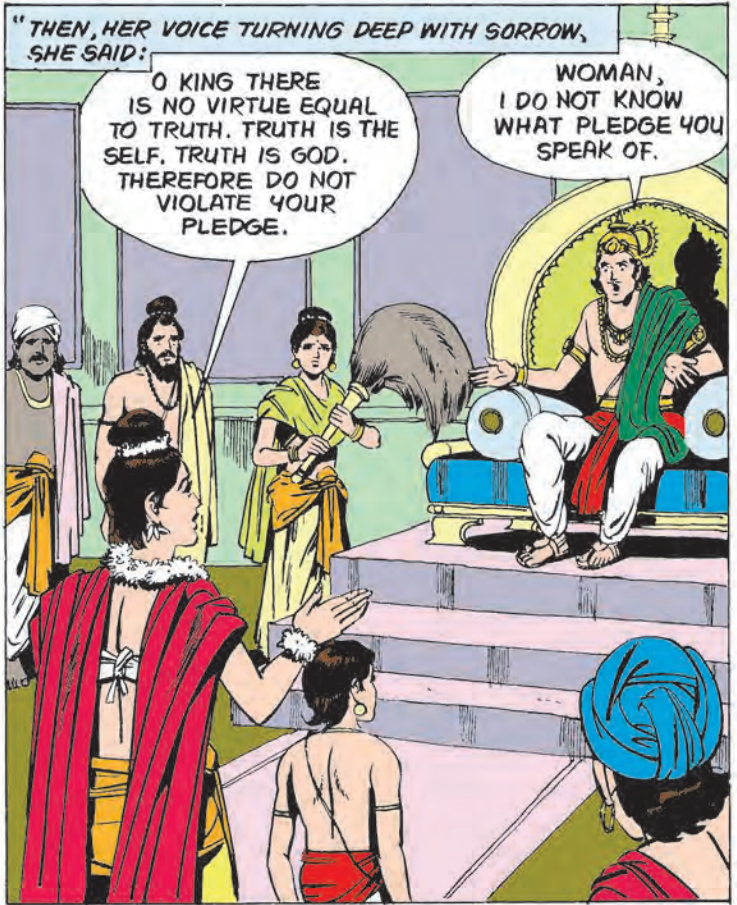
YOU THINK NO ONE KNOWS OF YOUR DEED. BUT NARAYANA, THE OMNISCIENT ONE, LIVES IN THE HEARTS OF ALL BEINGS. AND HE HAS SEEN YOU.



"THEN, HER VOICE TURNING DEEP WITH SORROW, SHE SAID:

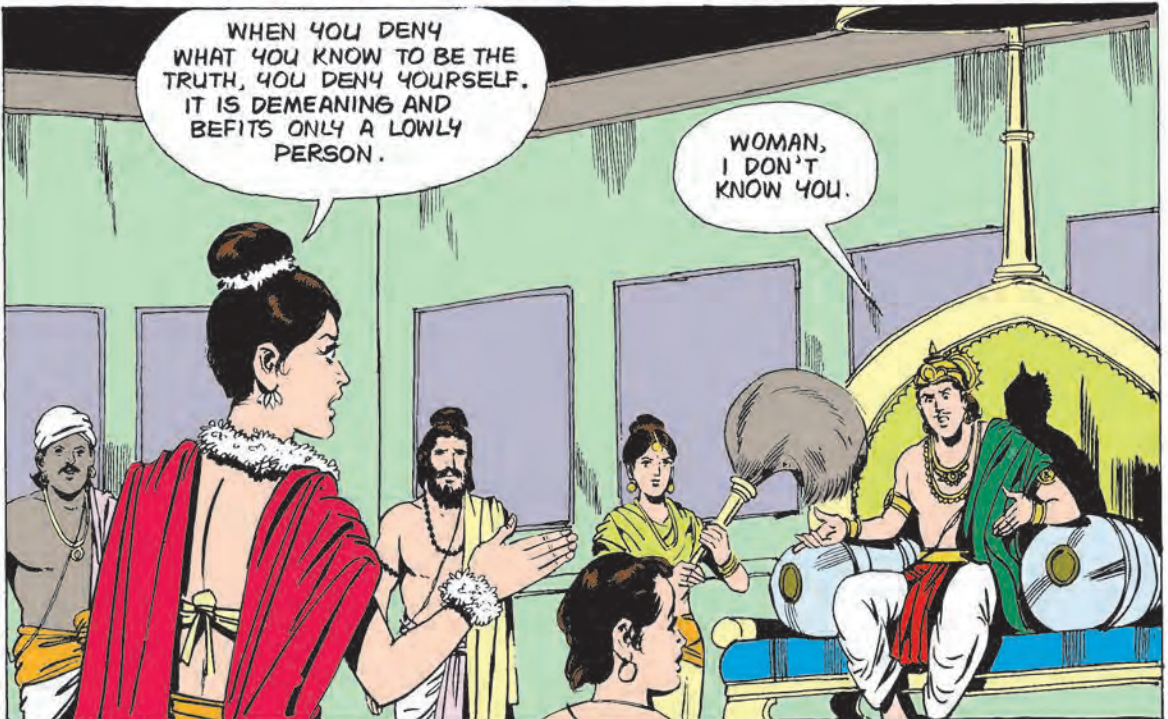
O KING THERE IS NO VIRTUE EQUAL TO TRUTH. TRUTH IS THE SELF. TRUTH IS GOD. THEREFORE DO NOT VIOLATE YOUR PLEDGE.

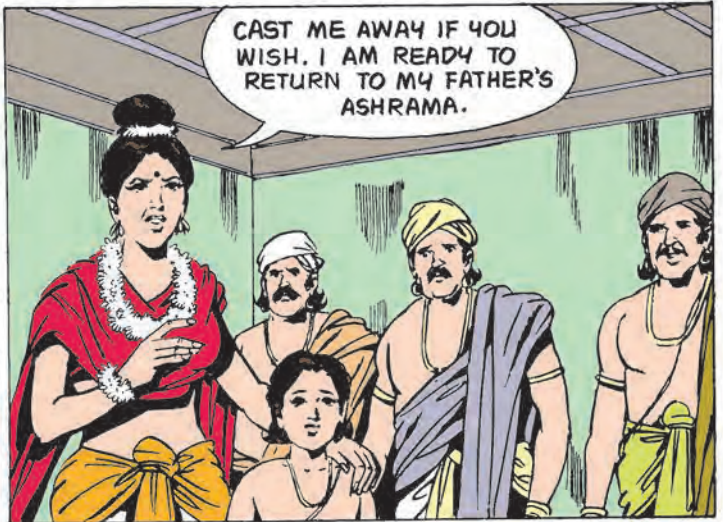
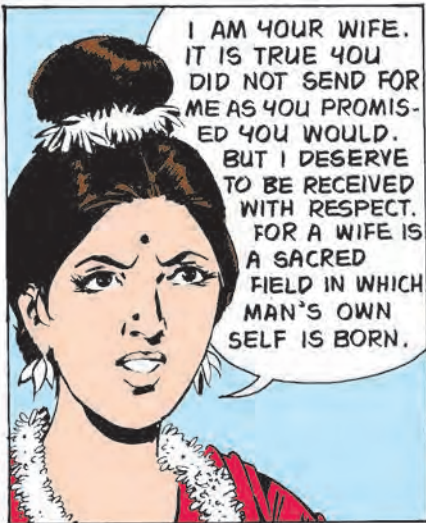
WOMAN, I DO NOT KNOW WHAT PLEDGE YOU SPEAK OF.

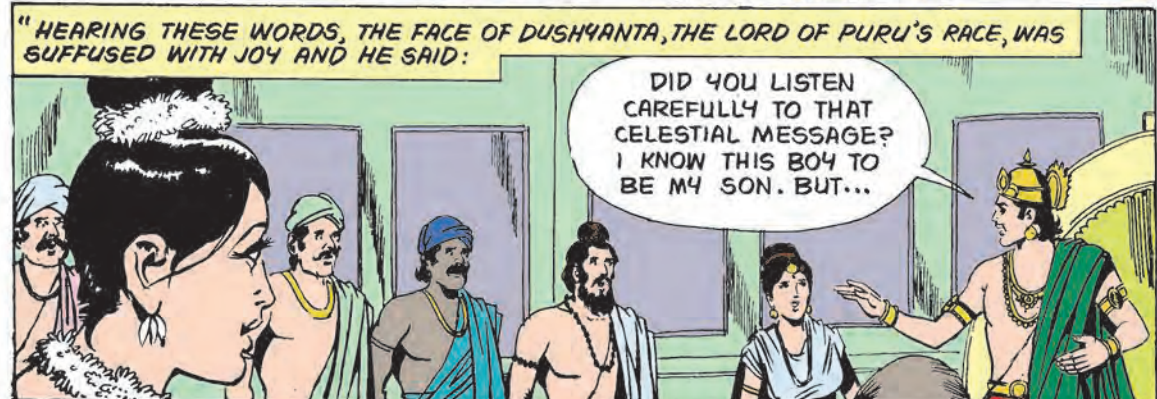
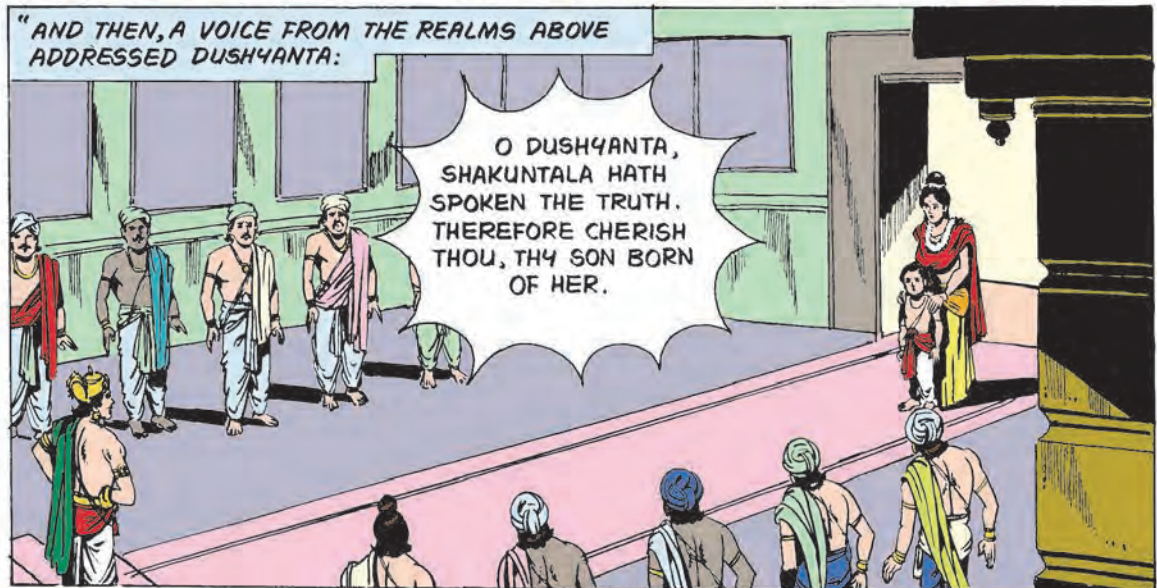
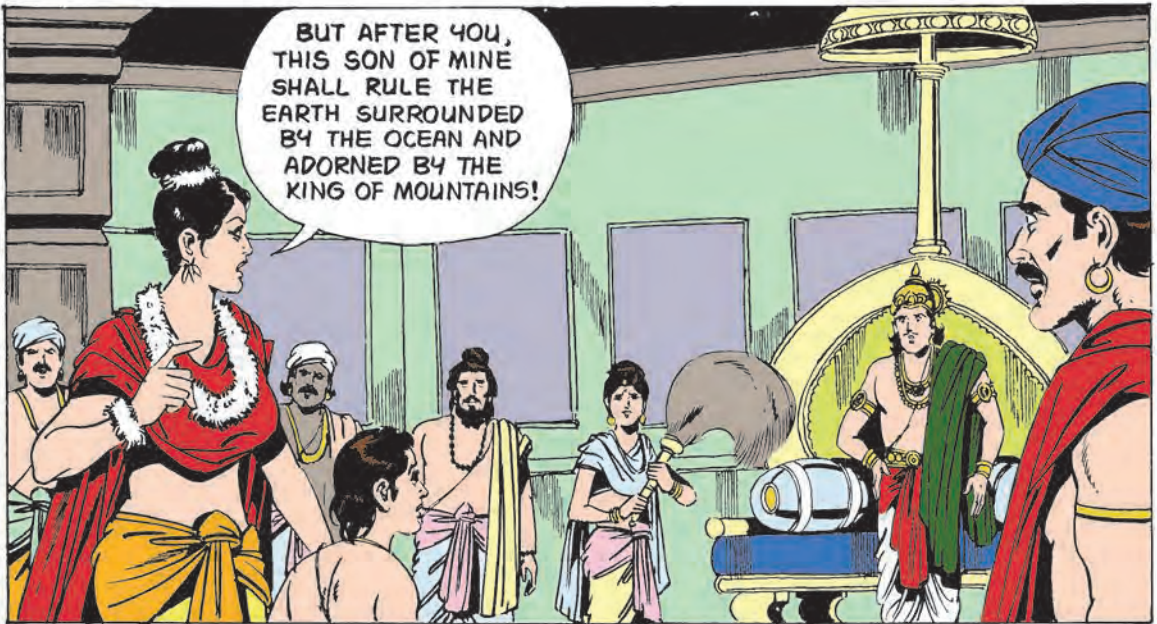


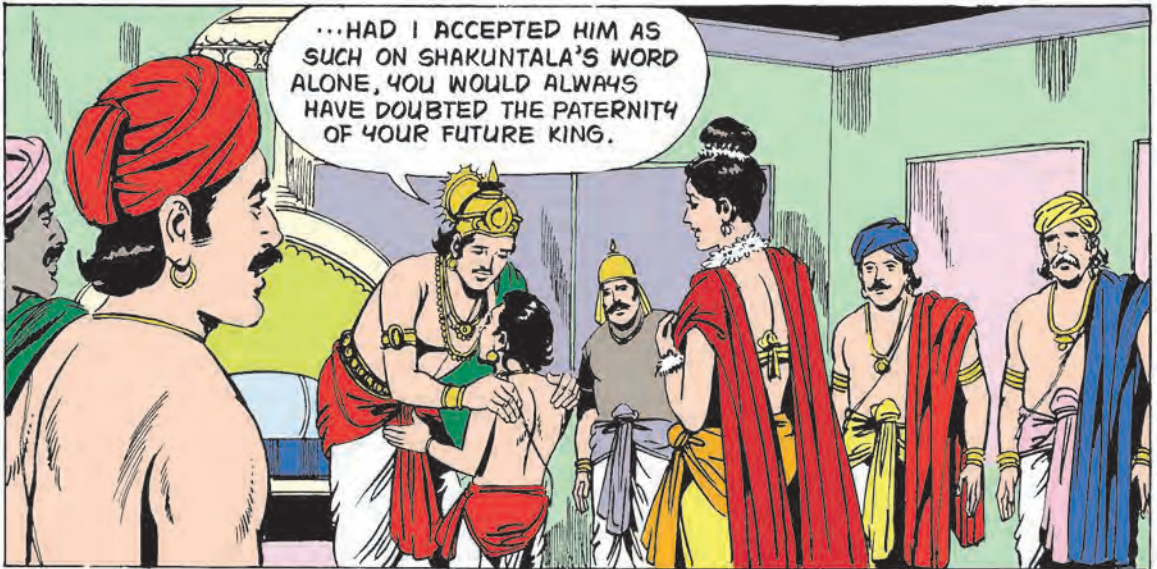
WHEN YOU DENY WHAT YOU KNOW TO BE THE TRUTH, YOU DENY YOURSELF. IT IS DEMEANING AND BEFITS ONLY A LOWLY PERSON.

WOMAN, I DON'T KNOW YOU.



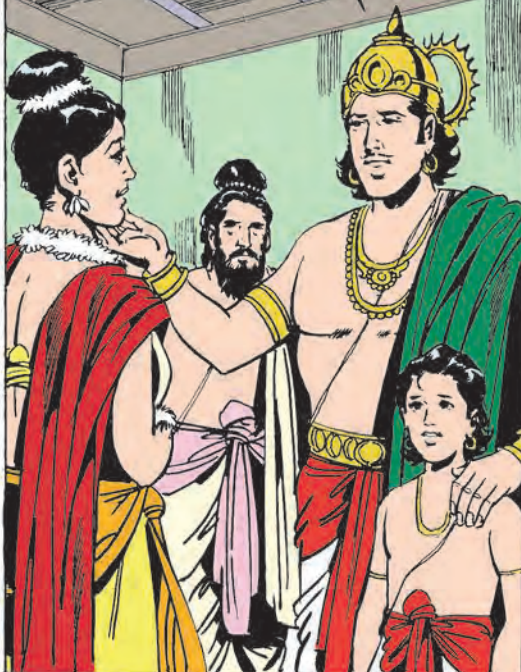






"AND AFTER PACIFYING SHAKUNTALA AFFECTIONATELY, HE SAID:

YOU ARE MY DEAREST, O SHAKUNTALA. OUR SON WHOM WE WILL NAME BHARATA, SHALL BE INSTALLED FORTHWITH AS MY HEIR-APPARENT.



"AND BHARATA, THE SON OF DUSHYANTA, TRAVERSED THE EARTH IN HIS SWIFT, RESPLENDENT CHARIOT AND FILLING THE SKIES WITH ITS REVERBERATIONS, CONQUERED ALL OTHER KINGS AND REIGNED SUPREME.



IT IS AFTER BHARATA TOO, O MONARCH, THAT THE GREAT RACE IN WHICH YOU WERE BORN IS NAMED.

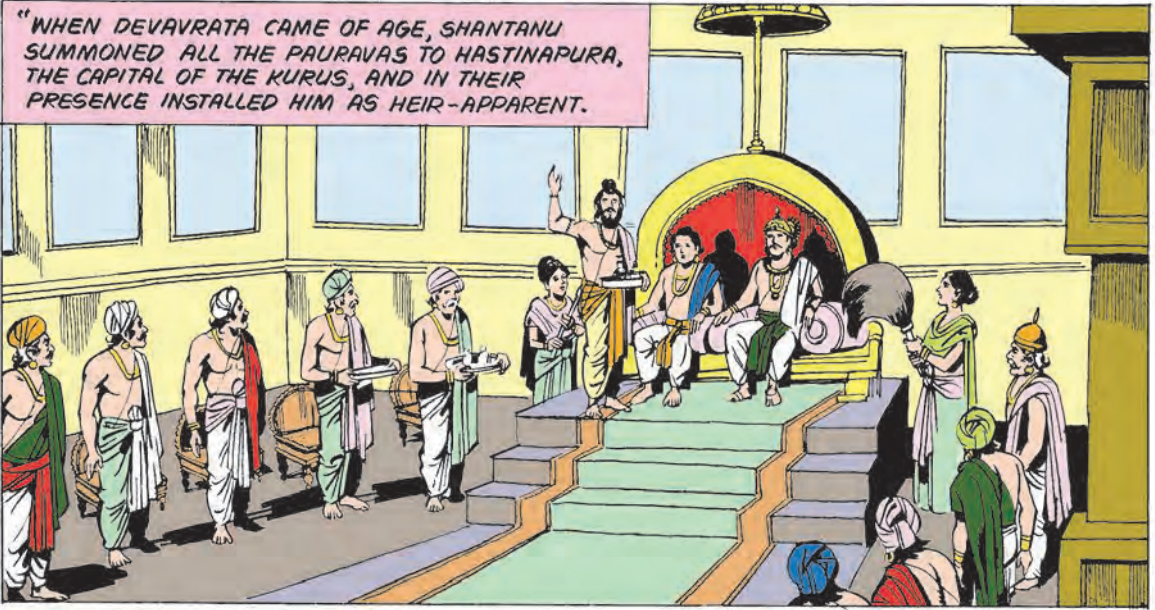
AND IN THE LINE OF THIS BHARATA WERE BORN MANY GODLIKE KINGS OF WHOM SAMVARANA, THE SIXTH, WAS THE FATHER OF KURU... AND PRATIPA, THE THIRTEENTH, THE FATHER OF SHANTANU.

AND SHANTANU'S SON, DEVAVRATA, BORN OF GANGA, CAME TO BE KNOWN AS BHEESHMA FOR THE TERRIBLE VOW HE TOOK.

WHAT WAS THAT VOW, O SAGE? WHY DID THE SON OF GANGA TAKE IT?

IT WAS TO BENEFIT HIS FATHER, O MONARCH, HE RESEMBLED HIS FATHER IN LOOKS, IN BEHAVIOUR AND MOST OF ALL IN TRUTHFULNESS OF SPEECH.

"WHEN DEVAVRATA CAME OF AGE, SHANTANU SUMMONED ALL THE PAURAVAS TO HASTINAPURA, THE CAPITAL OF THE KURUS, AND IN THEIR PRESENCE INSTALLED HIM AS HEIR-APPARENT."



"FOUR YEARS LATER, WHEN SHANTANU WAS WALKING IN THE WOODS ON THE BANK OF THE YAMUNA, A SWEET SCENT FILLED THE AIR, AND AS HE WALKED ON WONDERING ABOUT ITS SOURCE, HE CHANCED UPON A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN WITH LARGE DARK EYES HE ASKED:

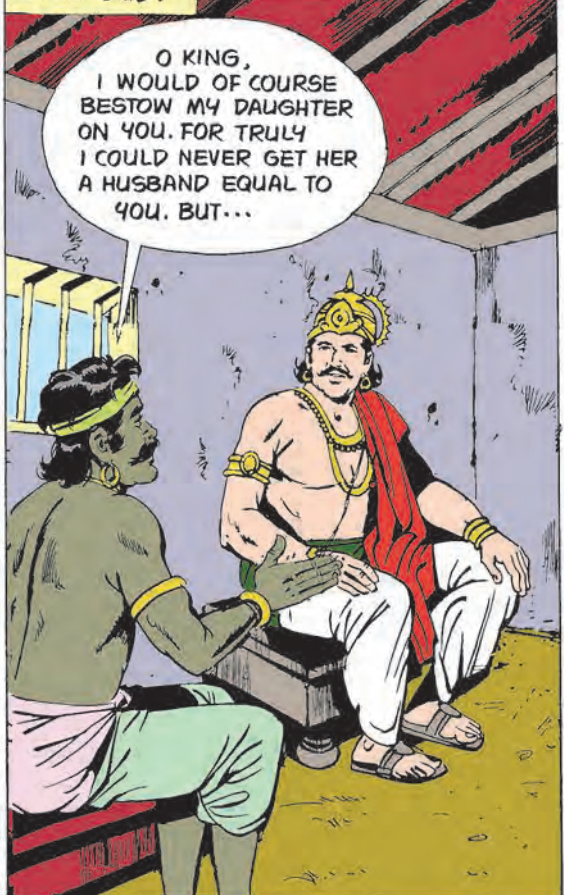
O MAIDEN,
WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE?

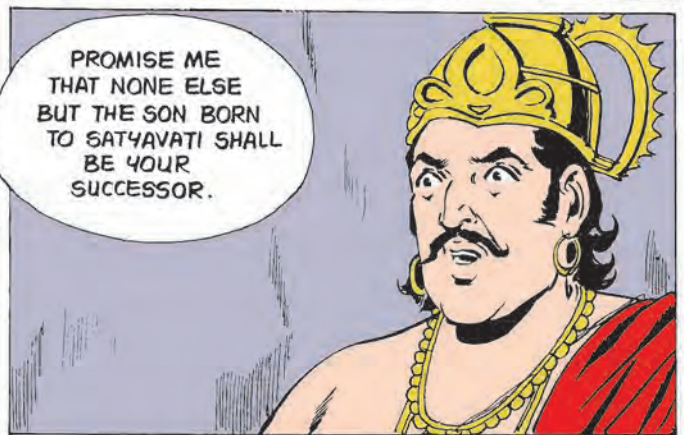
I AM
SATHAVATI. AT
THE BEHEST OF MY
FATHER, THE CHIEF
OF THE FISHERMEN,
I FERRY PASSENGERS
ACROSS THE
RIVER.



"AND SHANTANU, DESIRING HER FOR A WIFE, WENT TO HER FATHER AND SOUGHT HIS CONSENT. THE FISHERMAN HEARD ALL AND THEN SAID:

O KING,
I WOULD OF COURSE
BESTOW MY DAUGHTER
ON YOU. FOR TRULY
I COULD NEVER GET HER
A HUSBAND EQUAL TO
YOU. BUT...

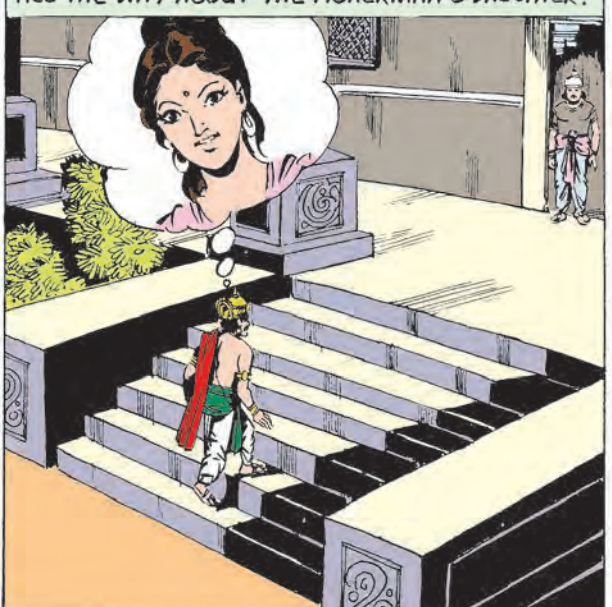




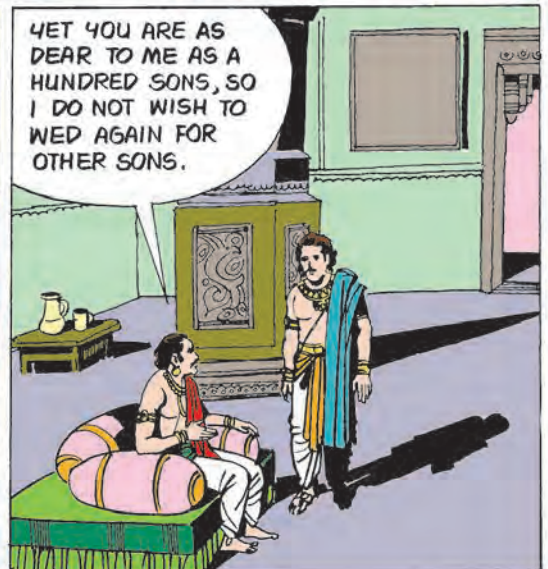
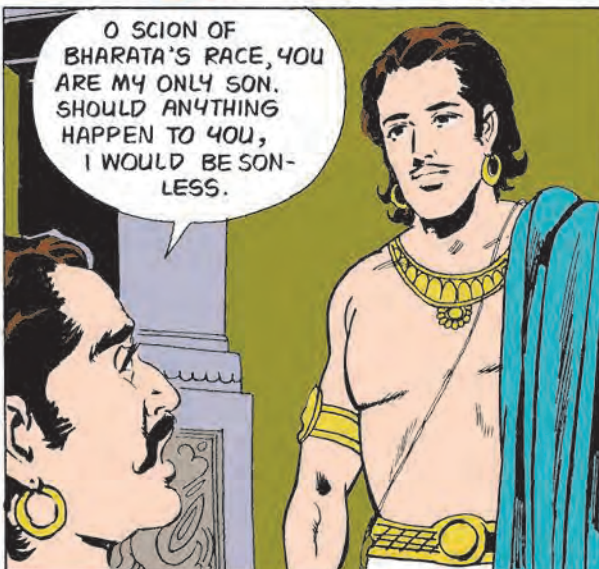
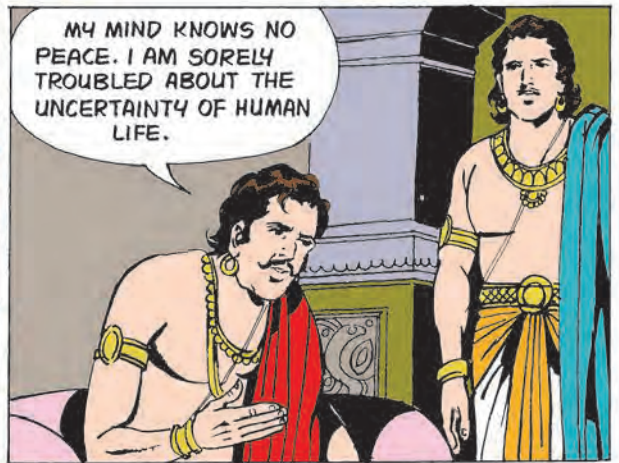
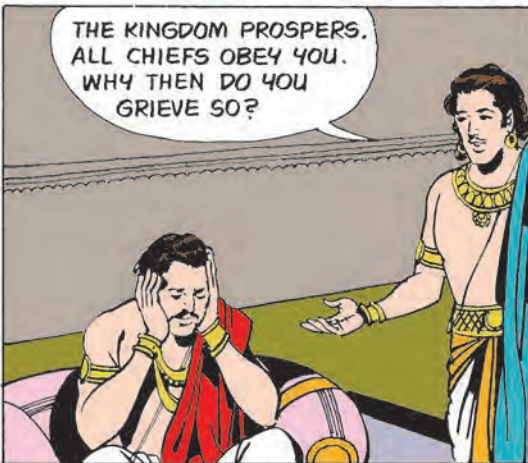
"SHANTANU HEARD HIS REQUEST AND HE KNEW HE COULD NOT GRANT IT.

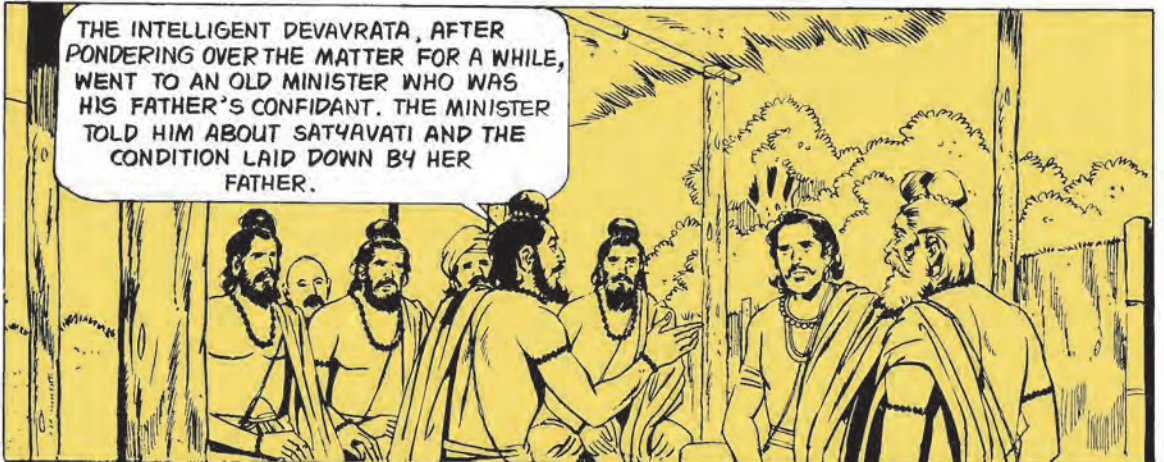
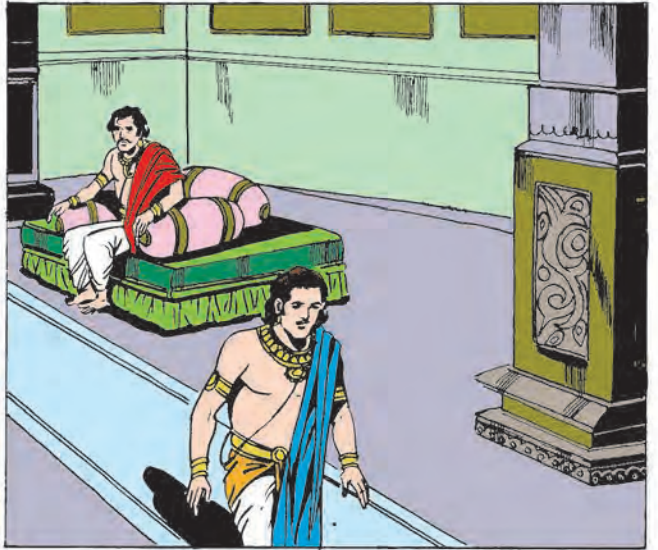
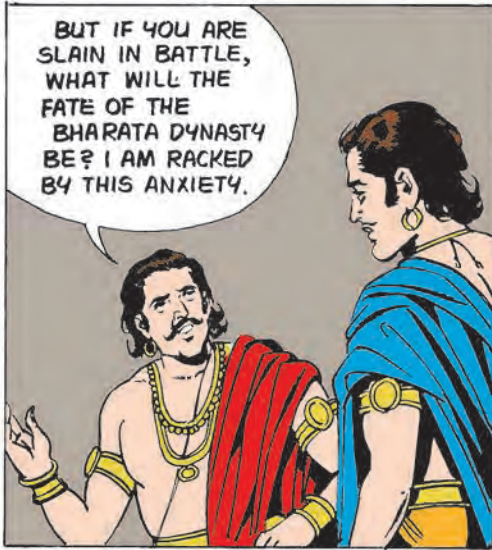


"YET HE RETURNED TO HASTINAPURA THINKING ALL THE WAY ABOUT THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER.

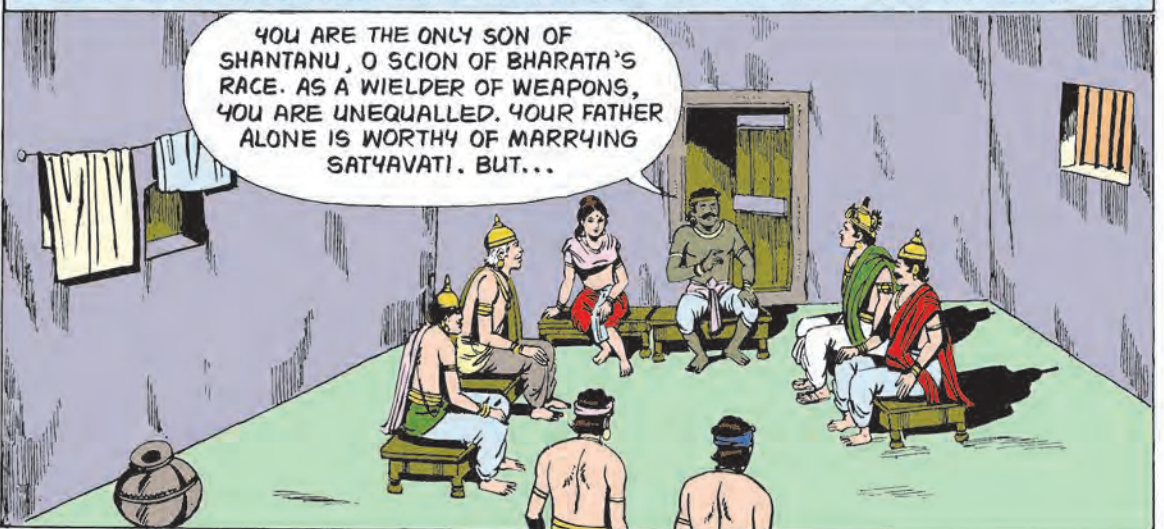


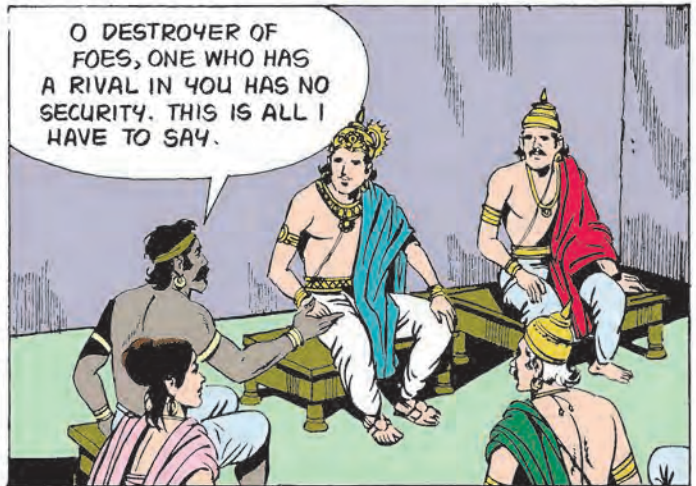
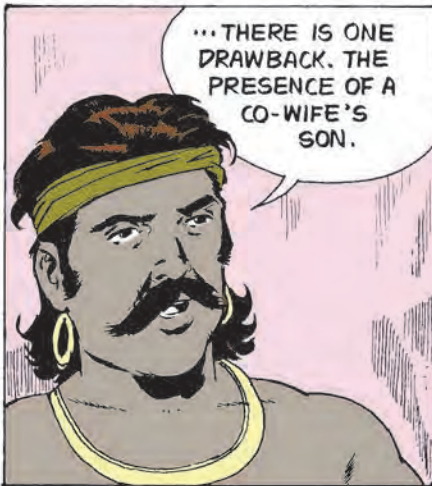
"AND THERE SHANTANU SPENT HIS TIME IN HOPELESS SOLITUDE TILL THE DAY DEVAVRATA DECIDED TO FIND OUT THE REASON FOR HIS SORROW."





"DEVAVRATA FORTHWITH WENT, WITH A FEW PAURAVA CHIEFS, TO THE CHIEF OF THE FISHERMEN AND ASKED FOR HIS DAUGHTER'S HAND ON BEHALF OF HIS FATHER. AND THE FISHERMAN REPLIED:





"URGED BY THE WISH TO SEE HIS FATHER HAPPY, DEVAVRATA SAID:



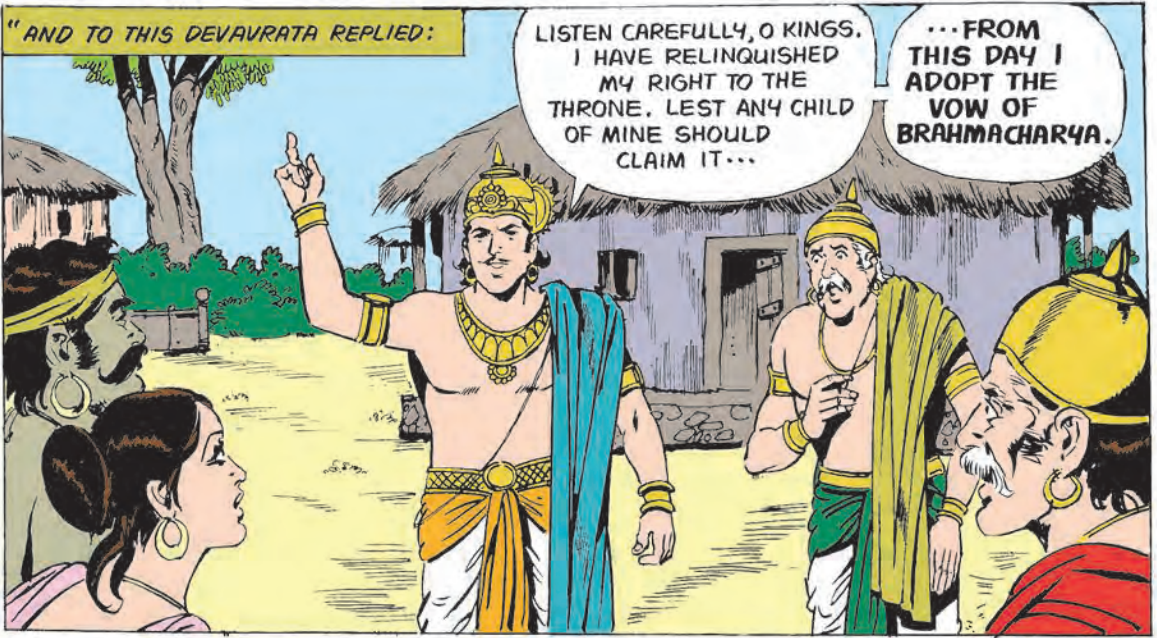
"BUT, GOADED BY THE DESIRE TO MAKE THE THRONE SECURE FOR HIS DAUGHTER'S SON, THE FISHERMAN SAID:



"AND TO THIS DEVAVRATA REPLIED:

LISTEN CAREFULLY, O KINGS.
I HAVE RELINQUISHED
MY RIGHT TO THE
THRONE. LEST ANY CHILD
OF MINE SHOULD
CLAIM IT...

...FROM
THIS DAY I
ADOPT THE
VOW OF
BRAHMACHARYA.

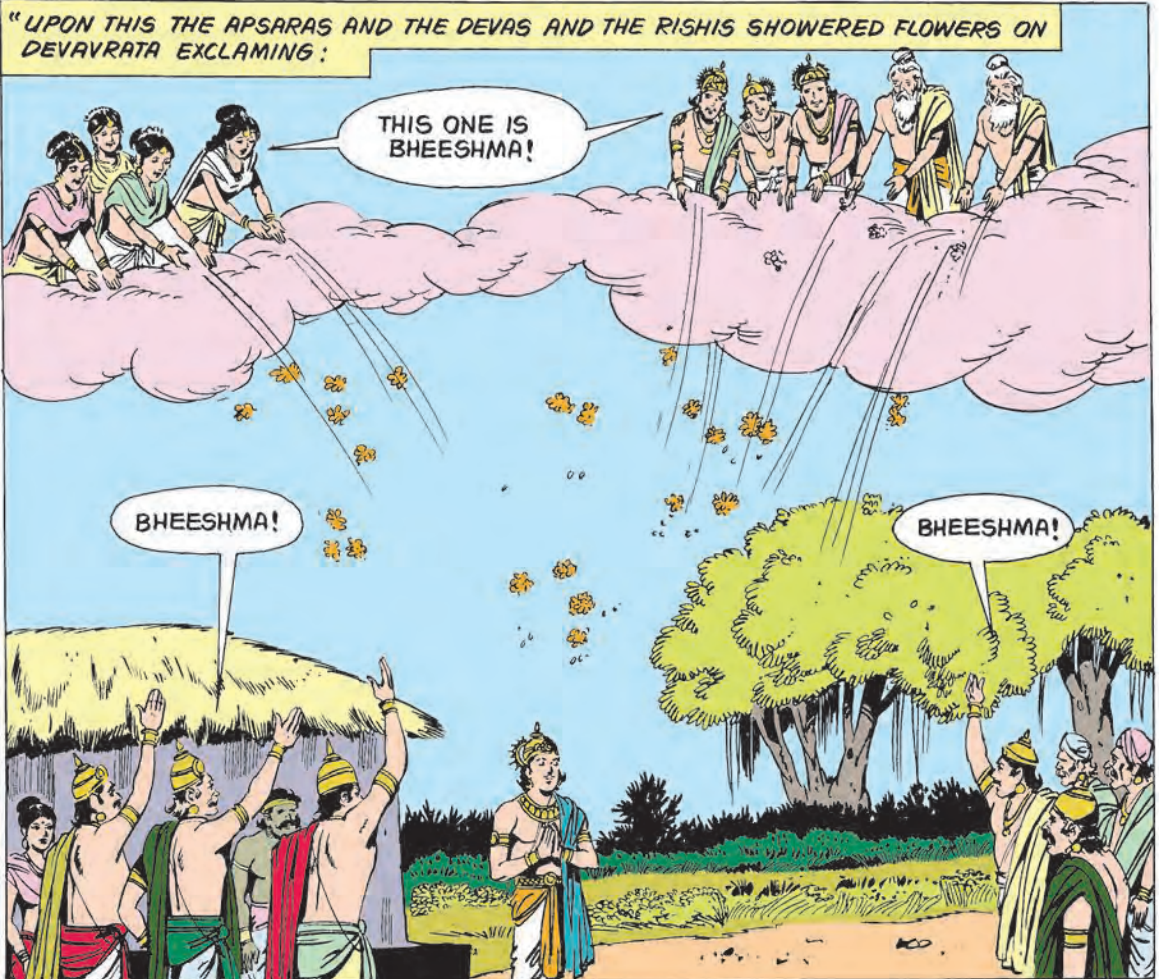


"UPON THIS THE APSARAS AND THE DEVAS AND THE RISHIS SHOWERED FLOWERS ON
DEVAVRATA EXCLAMING:

THIS ONE IS
BHEESHMA!

BHEESHMA!

BHEESHMA!



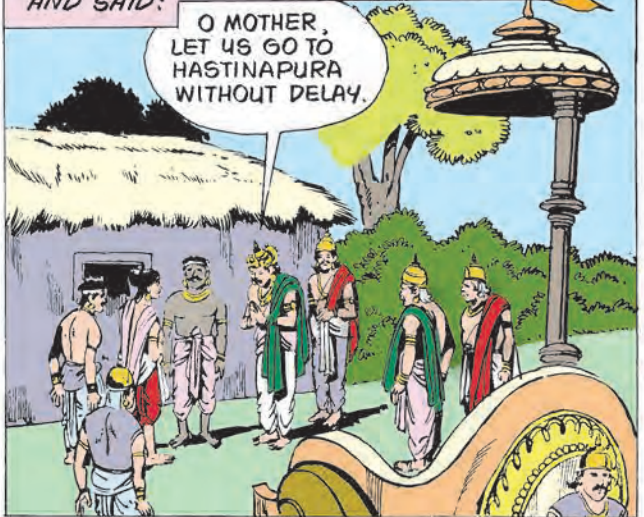
"AND WITNESSING ALL THIS THE FISHERMAN EXCLAIMED:

I GIVE MY DAUGHTER IN MARRIAGE TO THE KING!

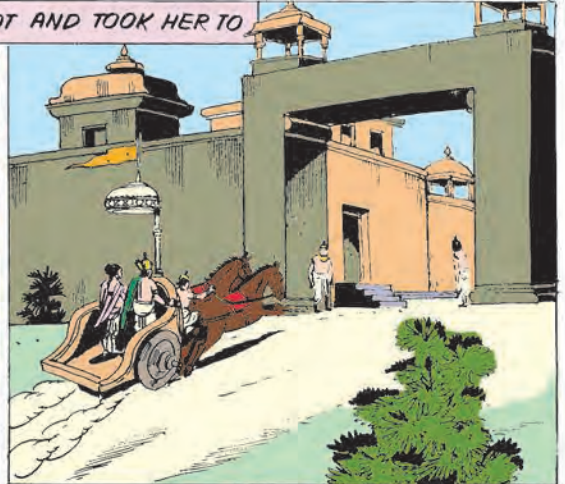
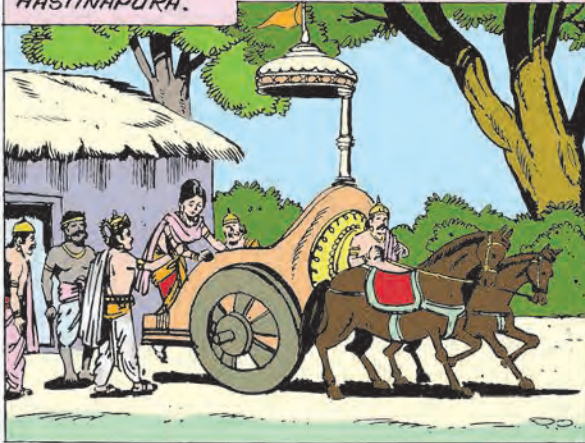


"BHEESHMA THEN TURNED TO SATYAVATI AND SAID:

O MOTHER, LET US GO TO HASTINAPURA WITHOUT DELAY.



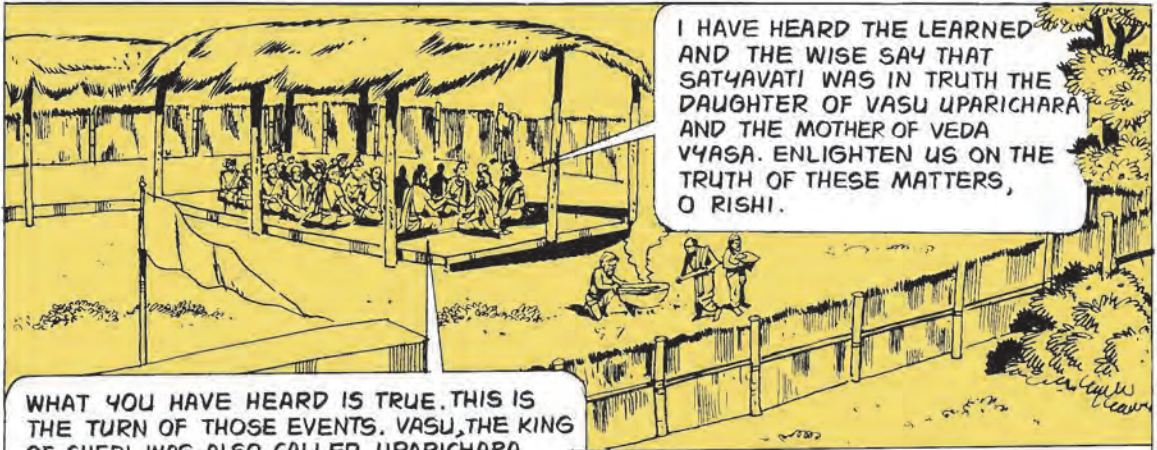
"THEN BHEESHMA HELPED HER INTO HIS CHARIOT AND TOOK HER TO HASTINAPURA.



"AMAZED BY THE EXTRAORDINARY ACT OF HIS SON, SHANTANU BESTOWED ON HIM THE BOON OF DEATH AT WILL.

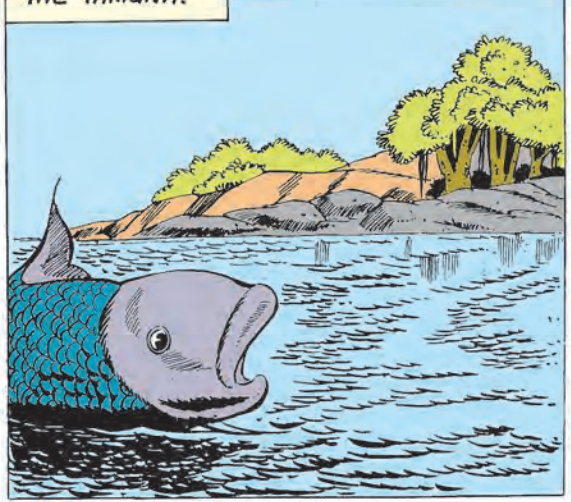
DEATH SHALL NEVER COME TO YOU AS LONG AS YOU WISH TO LIVE. O SINLESS ONE, ONLY AT YOUR BIDDING SHALL DEATH APPROACH YOU.



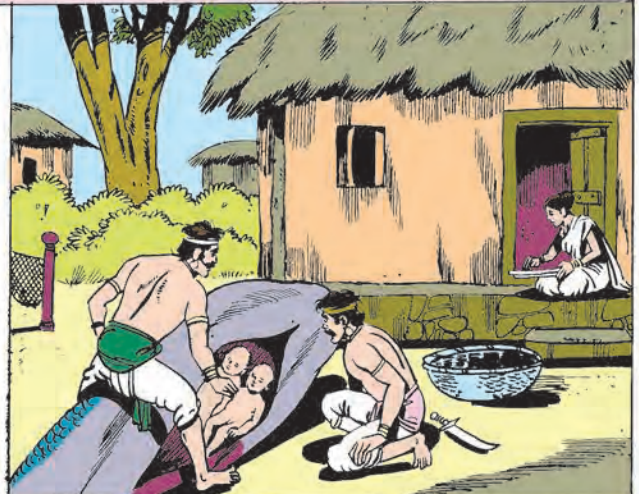
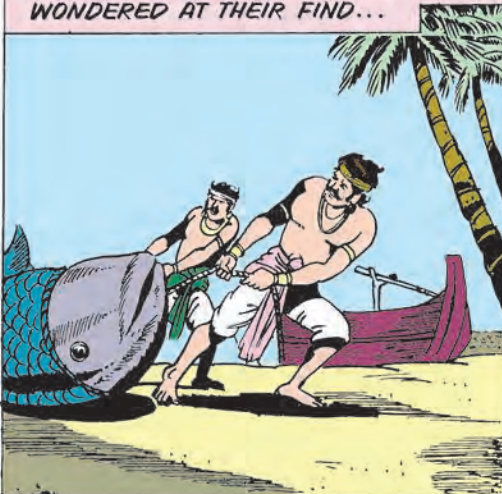


WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD IS TRUE. THIS IS THE TURN OF THOSE EVENTS. VASU, THE KING OF CHEDI, WAS ALSO CALLED UPARICHARA BECAUSE HE COURSED THROUGH THE SKY IN A CELESTIAL CHARIOT GIVEN TO HIM BY INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS.

ONCE THE SEED OF THIS UPARICHARA WAS SWALLOWED BY A FISH IN THE WATERS OF THE YAMUNA.

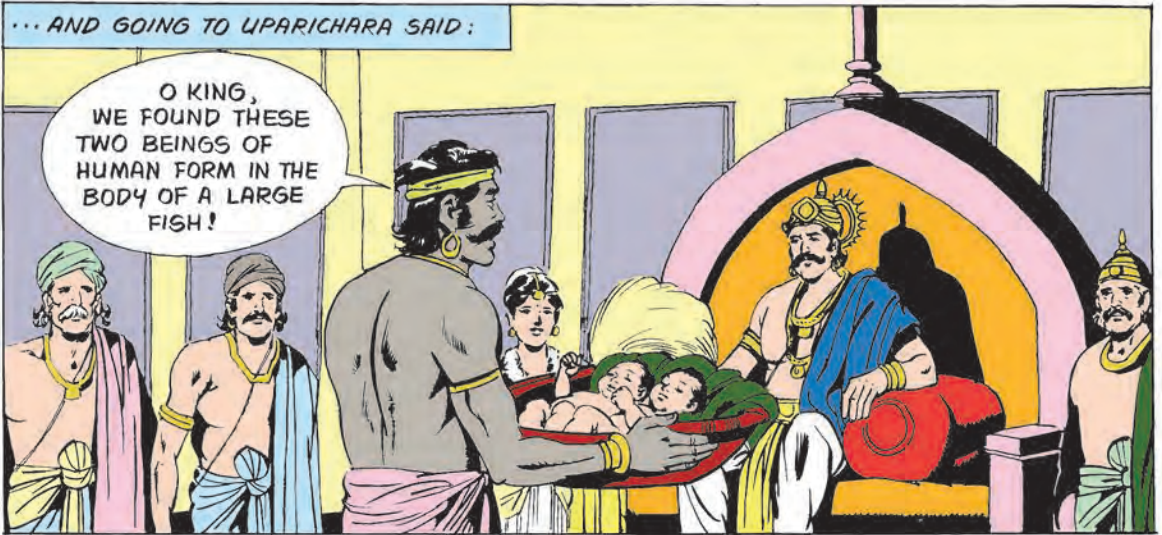


A FEW MONTHS LATER, THE FISH WAS CAUGHT BY SOME FISHERMEN AND IN THE STOMACH OF THAT FISH THEY FOUND A MALE AND A FEMALE CHILD. THE FISHERMEN WONDERED AT THEIR FIND...

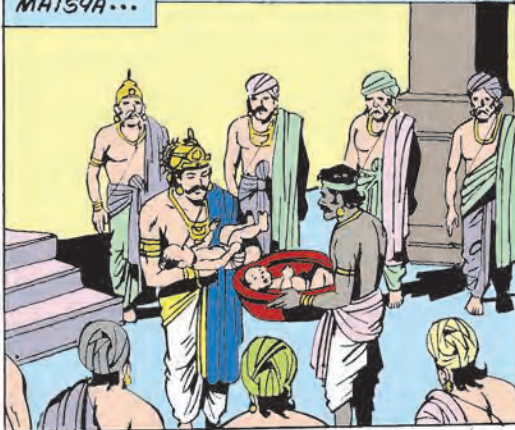


... AND GOING TO UPARICHARA SAID :

O KING,
WE FOUND THESE
TWO BEINGS OF
HUMAN FORM IN THE
BODY OF A LARGE
FISH!

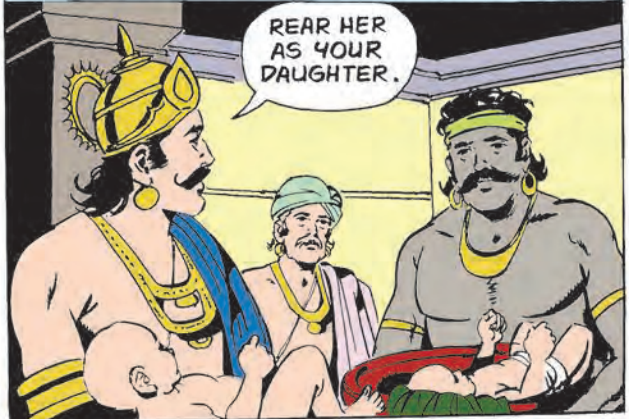


" UPARICHARA TOOK THE MALE CHILD
WHO LATER BECAME THE KING OF
MATSYA...



... AND GAVE THE FEMALE CHILD WHO SMELT
STRONGLY OF FISH TO THE FISHERMAN, SAYING:

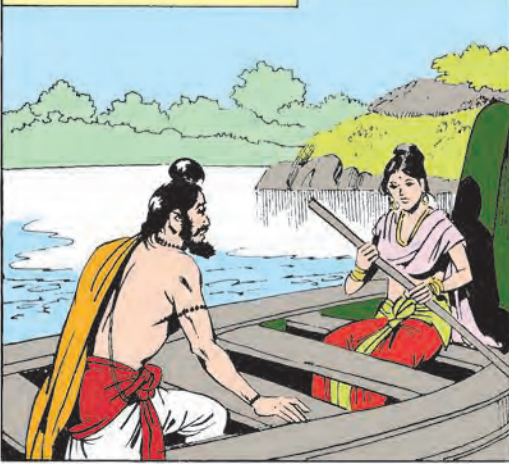
REAR HER
AS YOUR
DAUGHTER.



" WHEN SHE GREW UP, THAT GIRL, WHO WAS SATYAVATI, PLIED A BOAT FOR HER FOSTER-FATHER ON THE WATERS OF THE YAMUNA.



"WHILE THUS ENGAGED, SATYAVATI WAS SEEN ONE DAY BY THE VENERABLE RISHI PARASHARA.



"AND AS SOON AS HE BEHELD HER, THE RISHI WAS SMITTEN WITH DESIRE.



"HE THEREUPON CREATED A FOG WHICH SHUT OUT THE LIGHT.

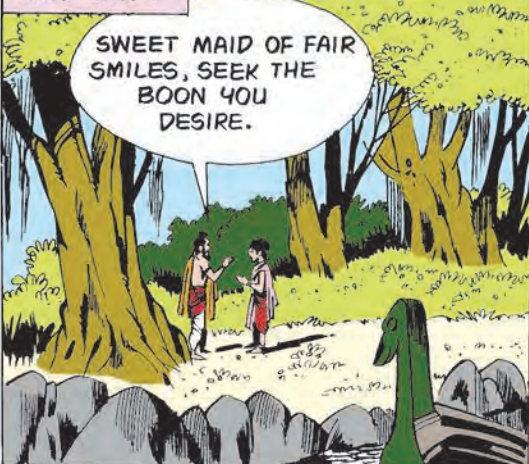


"AND THE MAID BEHOLDING THE FOG WONDERED AT THE MARVEL.



"AND THAT BEST OF RISHIS SMILED AND SAID:

SWEET MAID OF FAIR SMILES, SEEK THE BOON YOU DESIRE.



LET THE ODOUR OF FISH THAT MY BODY NOW EMITS BE TRANSFORMED INTO A SWEET SCENT.

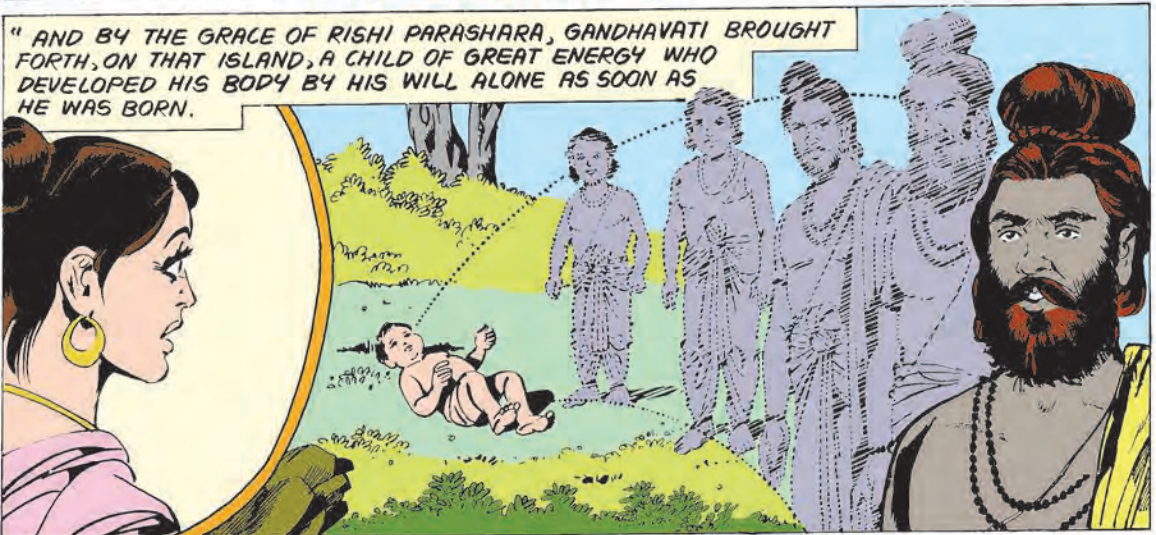
SO BE IT.



"THE RISHI GRANTED HER WISH FORTHWITH AND SATYAVATI CAME TO BE KNOWN ALSO AS GANDHAVATI, THE SWEET-SCENTED ONE."



"AND BY THE GRACE OF RISHI PARASHARA, GANDHAVATI BROUGHT FORTH, ON THAT ISLAND, A CHILD OF GREAT ENERGY WHO DEVELOPED HIS BODY BY HIS WILL ALONE AS SOON AS HE WAS BORN."

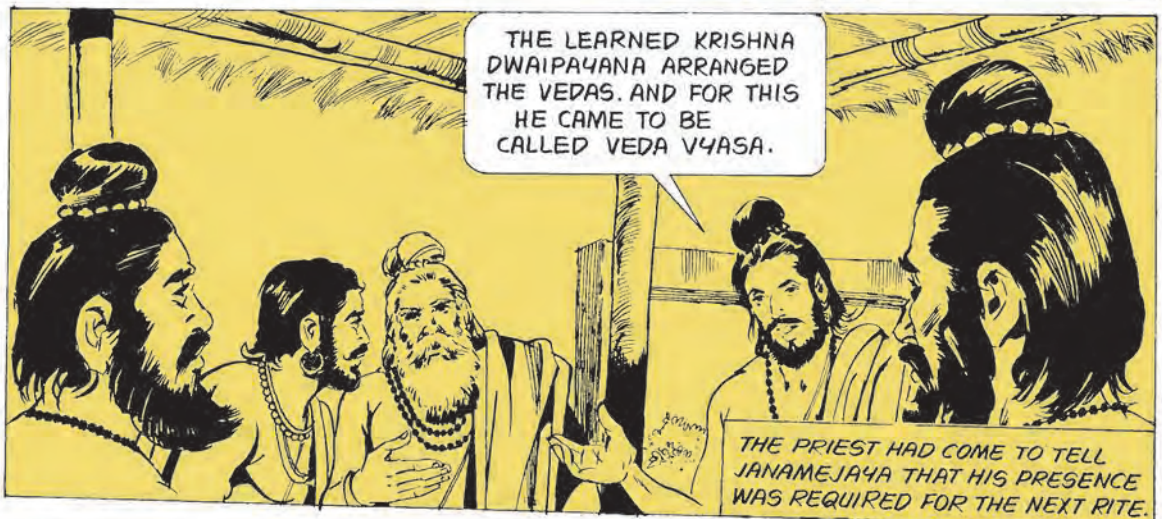
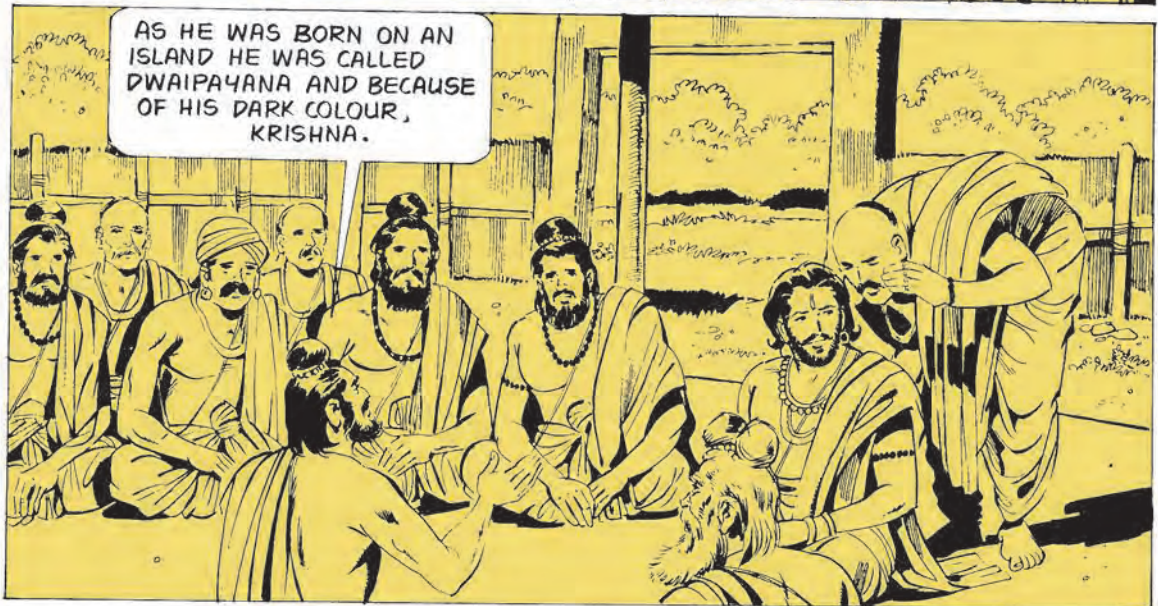
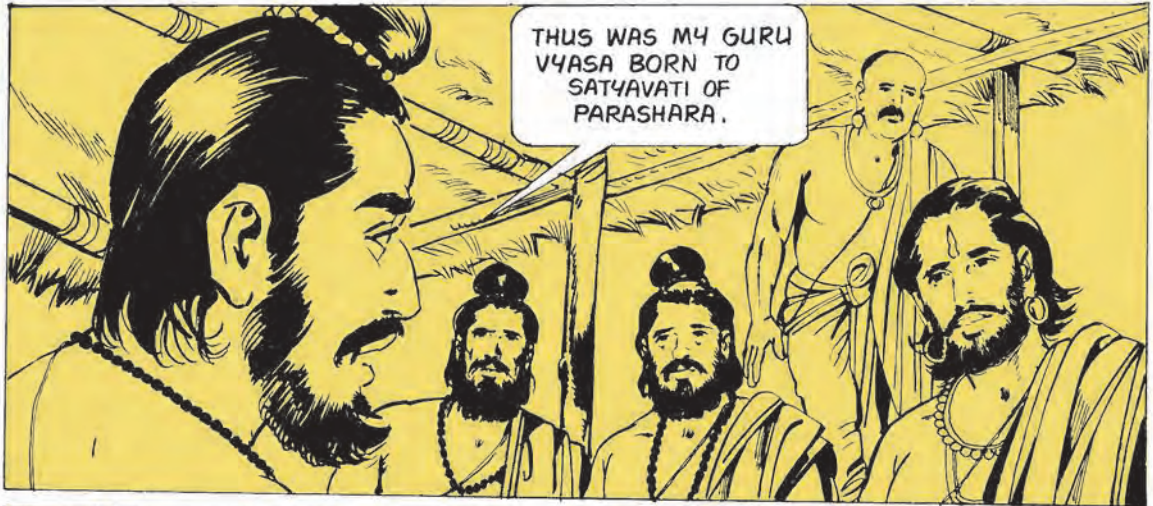


"AND THE ILLUSTRIOUS ONE SETTING HIS MIND ON ASCETICISM SAID:

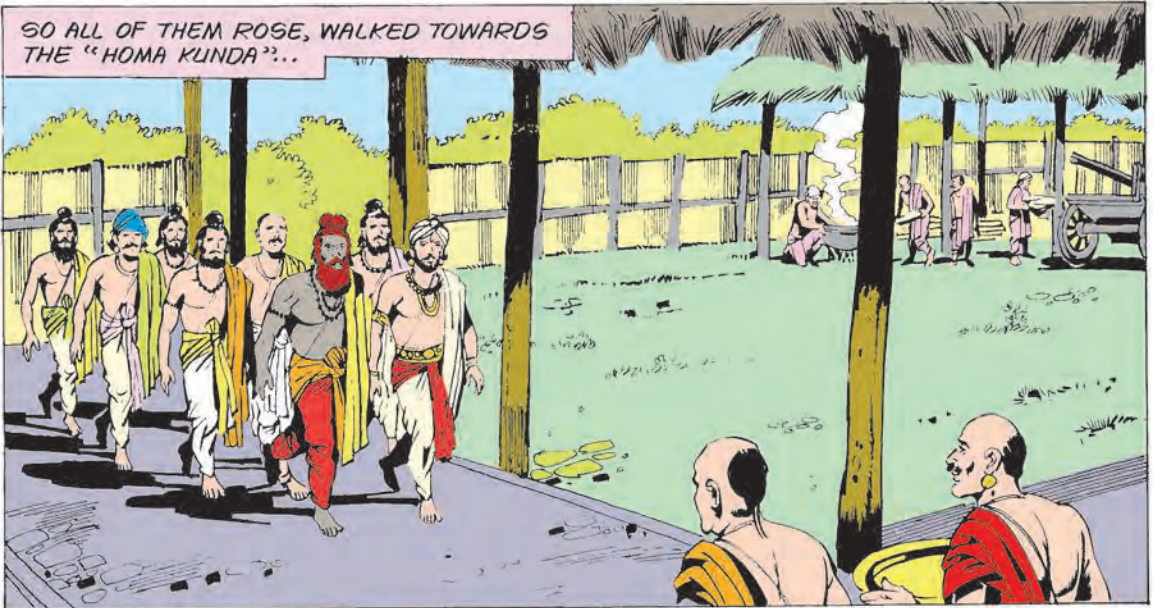


"AND HE WENT AWAY."

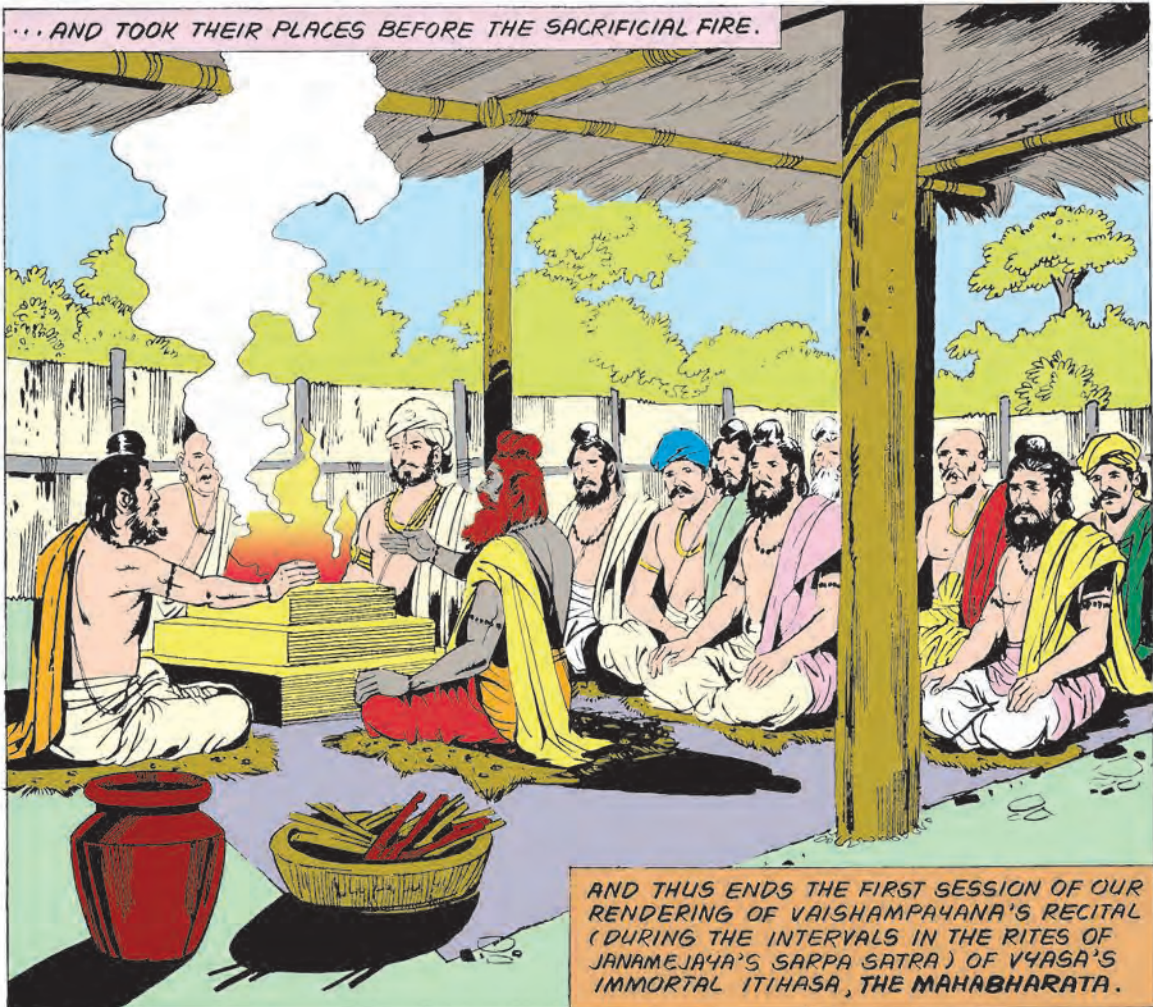




SO ALL OF THEM ROSE, WALKED TOWARDS THE "HOMA KUNDA"...



... AND TOOK THEIR PLACES BEFORE THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE.



AND THUS ENDS THE FIRST SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL (DURING THE INTERVALS IN THE RITES OF JANAMEJAYA'S SARPA SATRA) OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARATA.

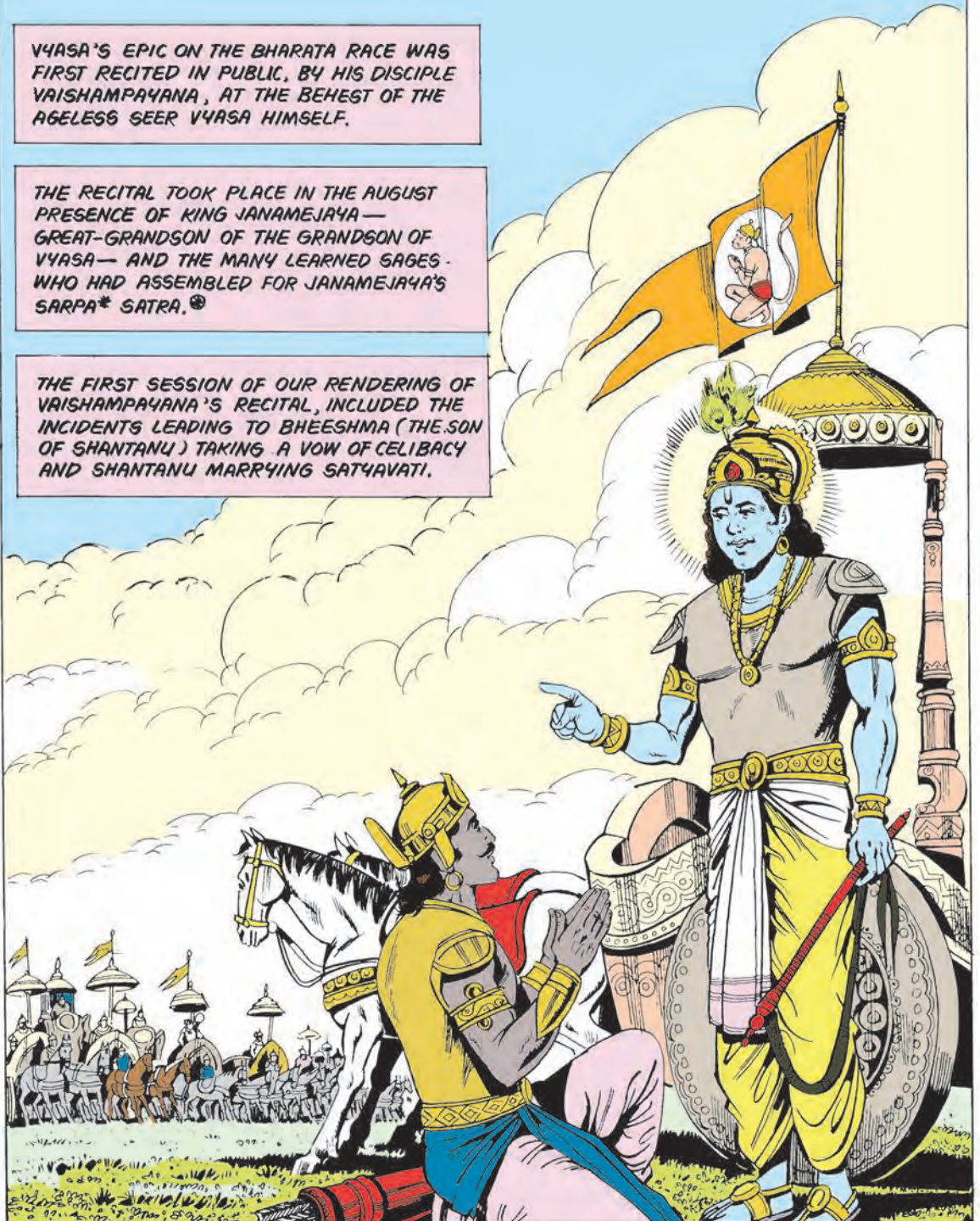
MAHABHARATA-2

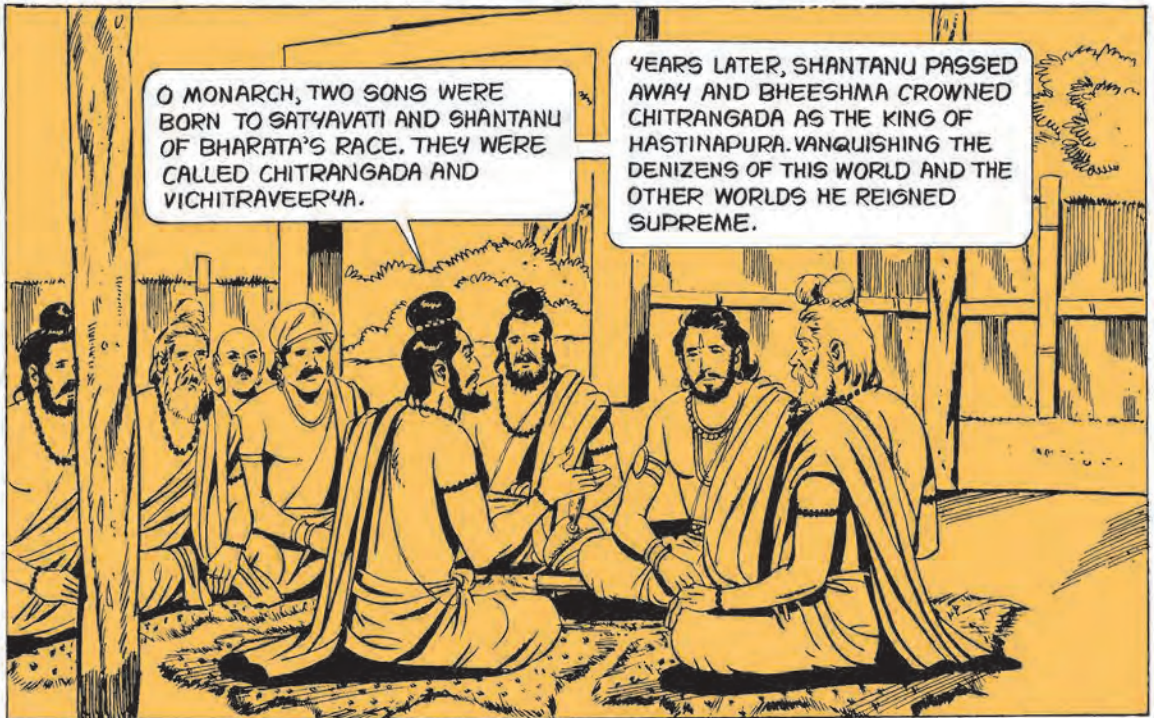
Bheeshma's Vow

VYASA'S EPIC ON THE BHARATA RACE WAS FIRST RECITED IN PUBLIC, BY HIS DISCIPLE VAISHAMPAYANA, AT THE BEHEST OF THE AGELESS SEER VYASA HIMSELF.

THE RECITAL TOOK PLACE IN THE AUGUST PRESENCE OF KING JANAMEJAYA — GREAT-GRANDSON OF THE GRANDSON OF VYASA — AND THE MANY LEARNED SAGES WHO HAD ASSEMBLED FOR JANAMEJAYA'S SARPA* SATRA. ☉

THE FIRST SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL, INCLUDED THE INCIDENTS LEADING TO BHEESHMA (THE SON OF SHANTANU) TAKING A VOW OF CELIBACY AND SHANTANU MARRYING SATYAVATI.





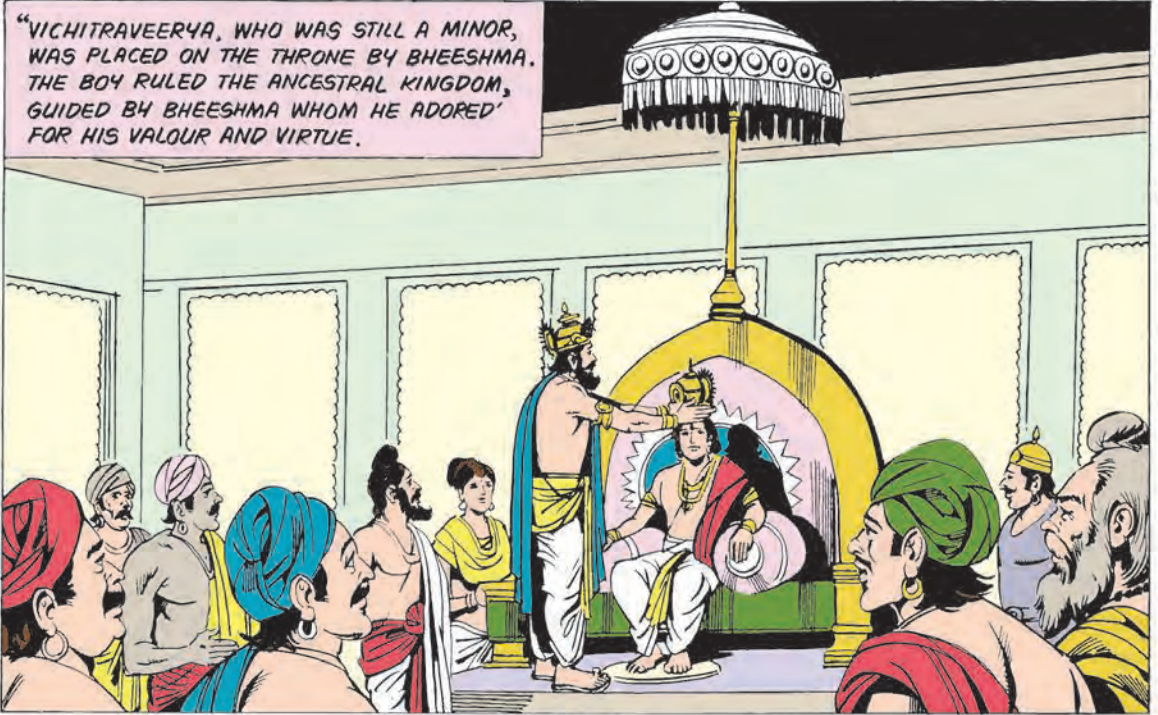
"IRKED BY HIS SUPREMACY, A GANDHARVA OF THE SAME NAME CHALLENGED HIM TO A FIGHT ON THE FIELD OF KURUKSHETRA.



"AFTER A TERRIBLE COMBAT, WHICH LASTED THREE YEARS, CHITRANGADA WAS SLAIN, AND THE GANDHARVA RETURNED TO HIS CELESTIAL ABODE.



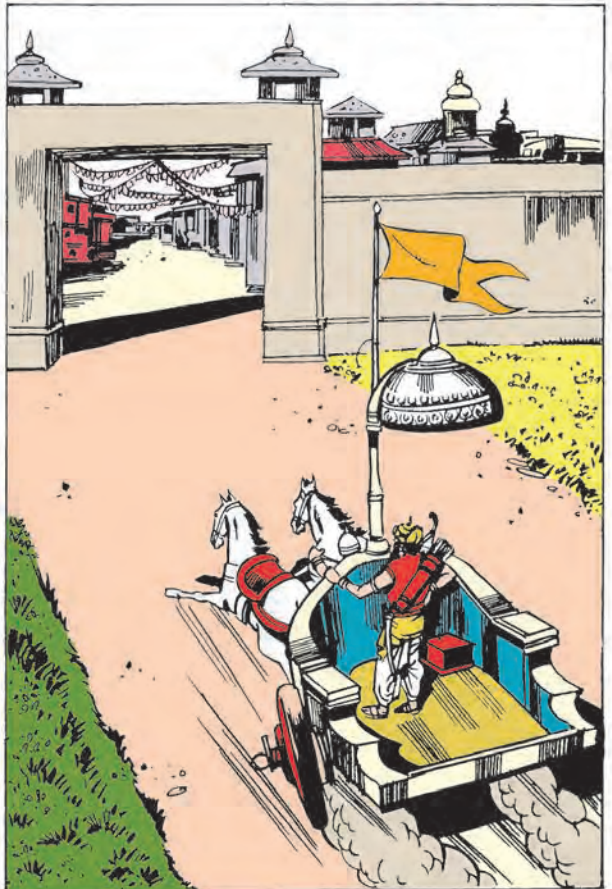
"VICHITRAVEERYA, WHO WAS STILL A MINOR, WAS PLACED ON THE THRONE BY BHEESHMA. THE BOY RULED THE ANCESTRAL KINGDOM, GUIDED BY BHEESHMA WHOM HE ADORED FOR HIS VALOUR AND VIRTUE.



WHEN VICHITRAVEERYA CAME OF AGE AND WAS READY FOR MARRIAGE, BHEESHMA, THE EVER-WATCHFUL, HEARD THAT THE THREE DAUGHTERS OF THE KING OF KASHI WOULD BE CHOOSING THEIR HUSBANDS AT A SWAYAMVARA CEREMONY.



SO, WITH THE PERMISSION OF SATYAVATI, BHEESHMA, THE FIERCE WARRIOR AND THE FAITHFUL REGENT, WENT TO KASHI IN A SINGLE CHARIOT.

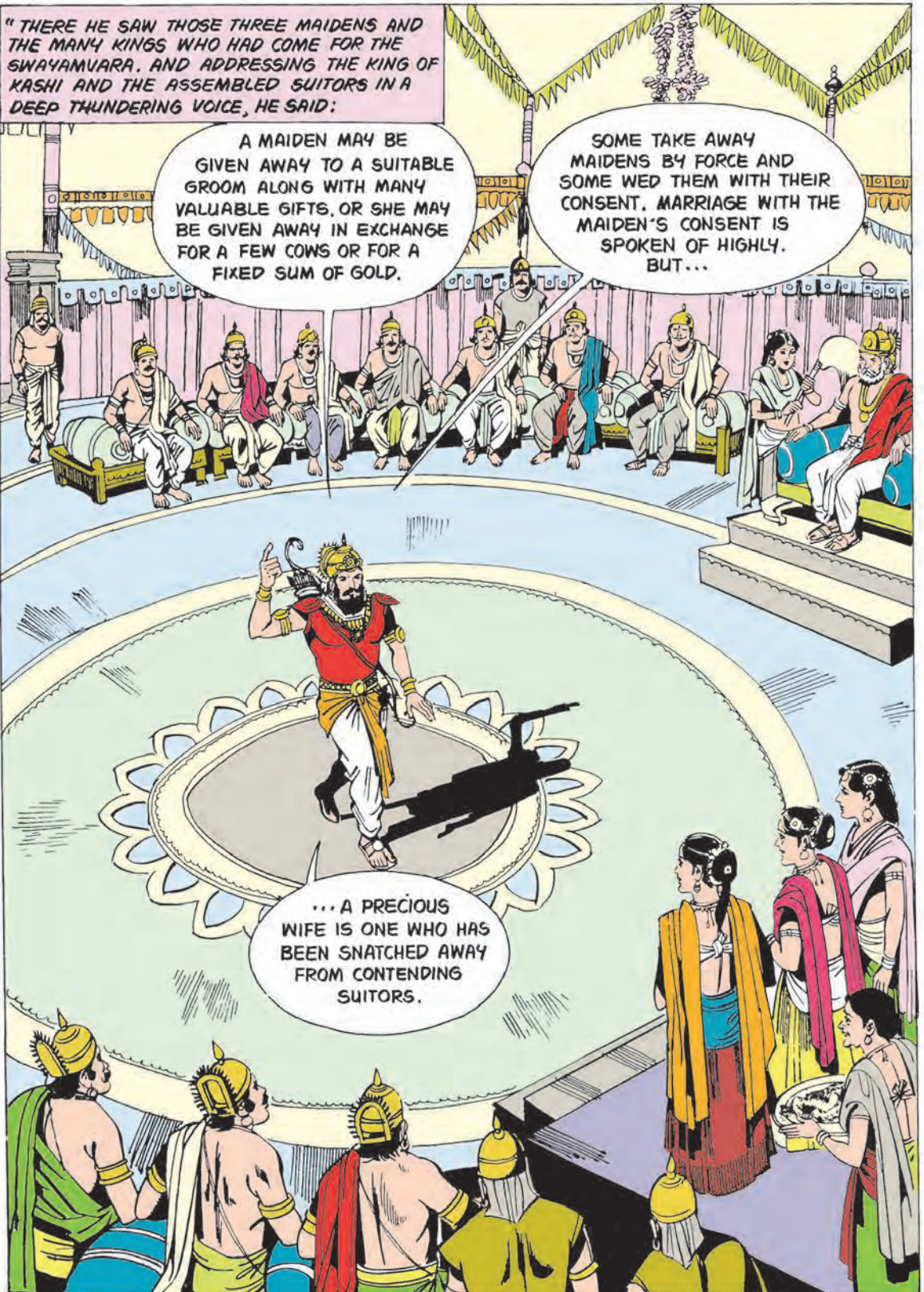


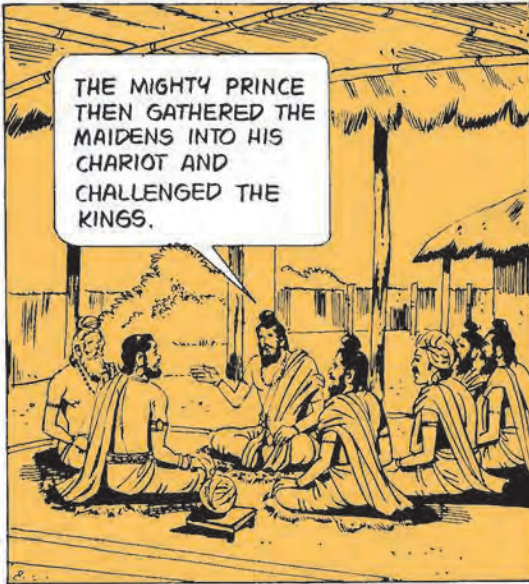
"THERE HE SAW THOSE THREE MAIDENS AND THE MANY KINGS WHO HAD COME FOR THE SWAYAMVARA. AND ADDRESSING THE KING OF KASHI AND THE ASSEMBLED SUITORS IN A DEEP THUNDERING VOICE, HE SAID:

A MAIDEN MAY BE GIVEN AWAY TO A SUITABLE GROOM ALONG WITH MANY VALUABLE GIFTS, OR SHE MAY BE GIVEN AWAY IN EXCHANGE FOR A FEW COWS OR FOR A FIXED SUM OF GOLD.

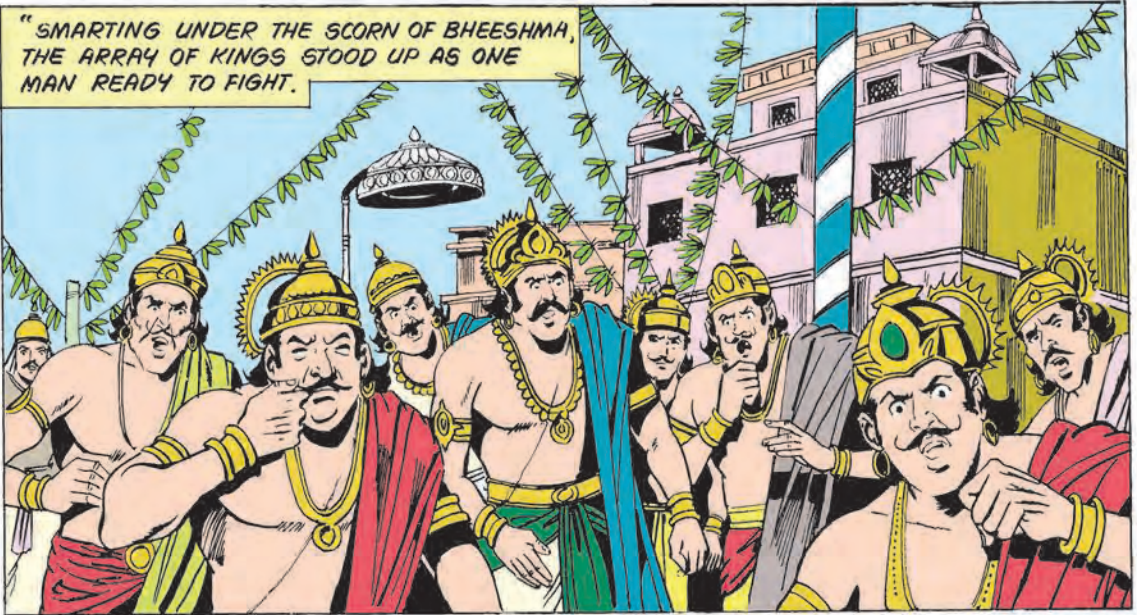
SOME TAKE AWAY MAIDENS BY FORCE AND SOME WED THEM WITH THEIR CONSENT. MARRIAGE WITH THE MAIDEN'S CONSENT IS SPOKEN OF HIGHLY. BUT...

... A PRECIOUS WIFE IS ONE WHO HAS BEEN SNATCHED AWAY FROM CONTENDING SUITORS.

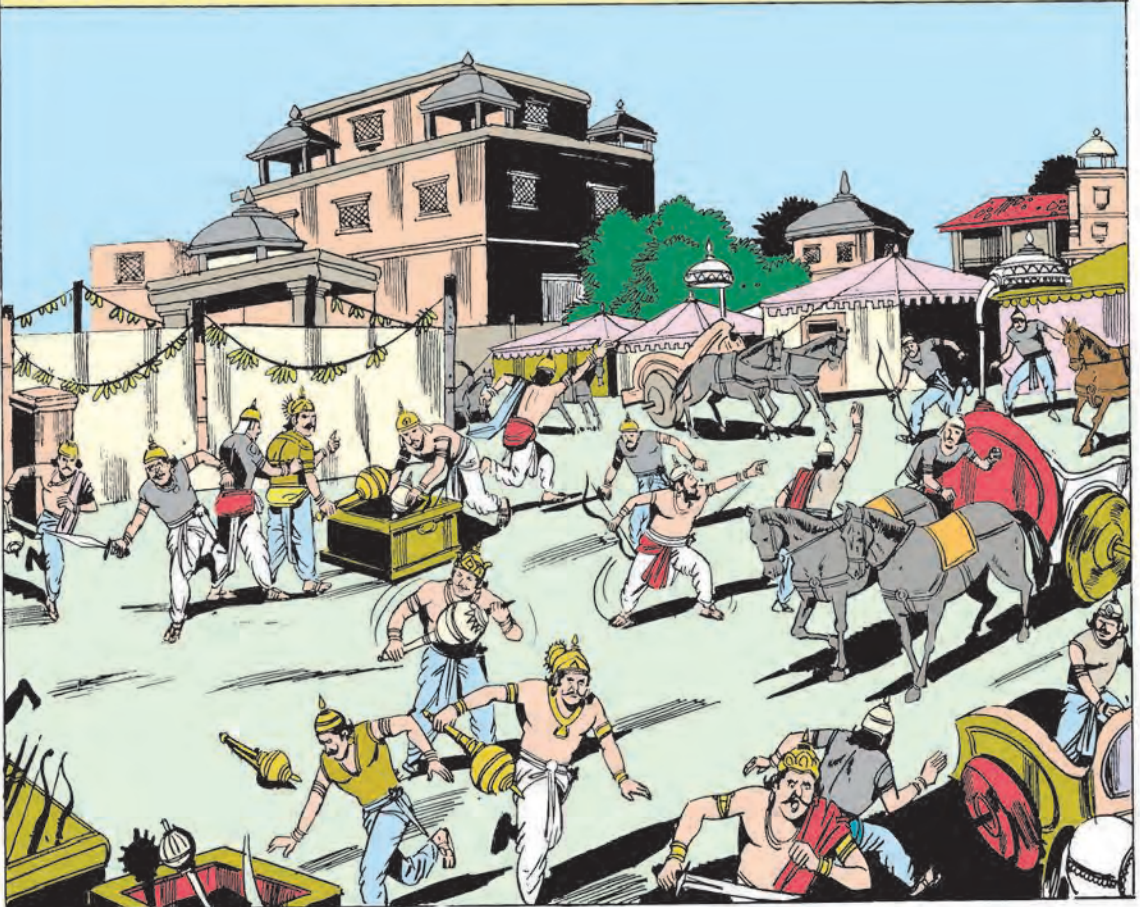




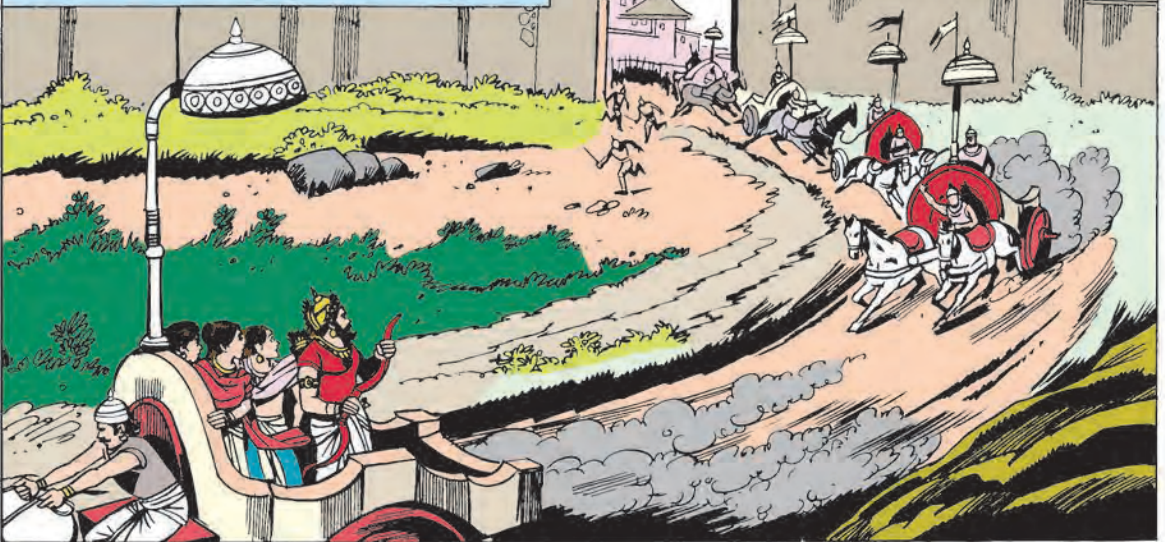
"SMARTING UNDER THE SCORN OF BHEESHMA, THE ARRAY OF KINGS STOOD UP AS ONE MAN READY TO FIGHT."



"WITHOUT A MOMENT'S LOSS, THE KINGS CAST OFF THEIR WEDDING FINERY AND REACHED FOR THEIR ARMOUR. THE SPARKLE OF THEIR ORNAMENTS, THE GLEAM OF THEIR WEAPONS AND THE CLANG OF METALS, RENT THE AIR WITH THE BRILLIANCE OF A METEORIC BURST."



"THE IMPATIENT KINGS, IN THEIR MARTIAL RAGE, BRANDISHED THEIR WEAPONS AND PURSUED THE CHIEF OF THE KURUS.



AND THEN THERE FOLLOWED, O MONARCH, A TERRIBLE FIGHT. THE SWARM OF ARROWS, FROM THE MULTITUDE OF KINGS, WAS CHECKED BY BHEESHMA WITH A SHOWER OF ARROWS FROM HIS SINGLE BOW — A SHOWER AS INNUMERABLE AS THE HAIR ON ONE'S BODY.

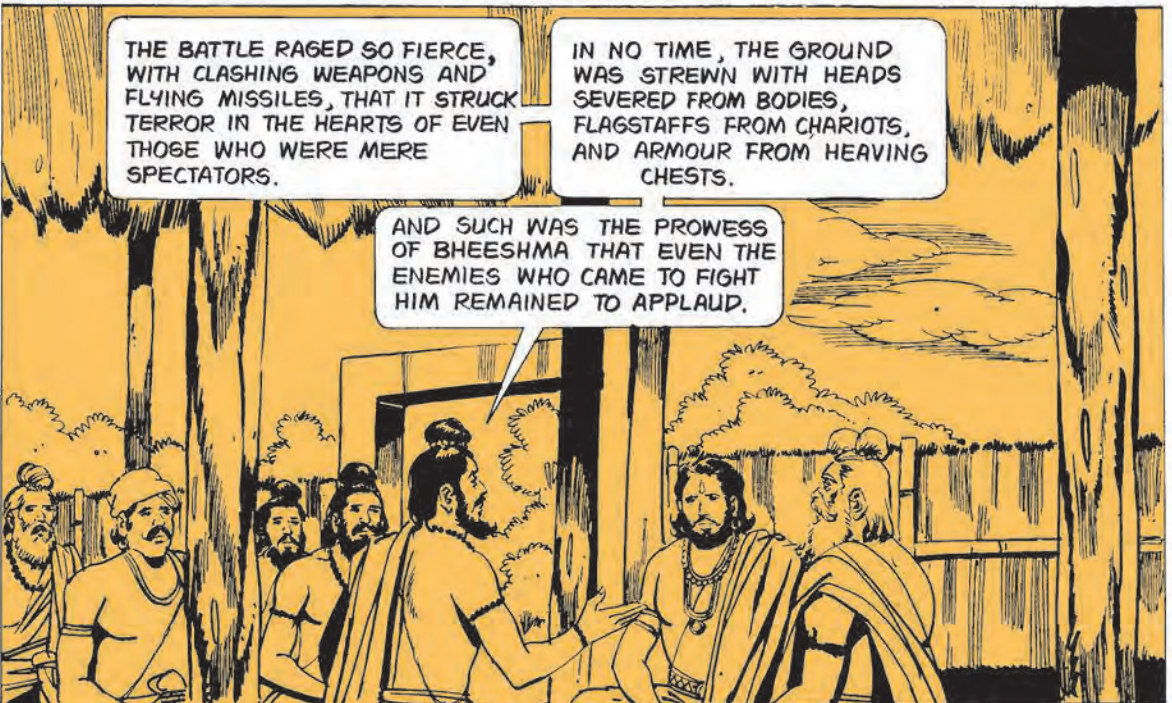




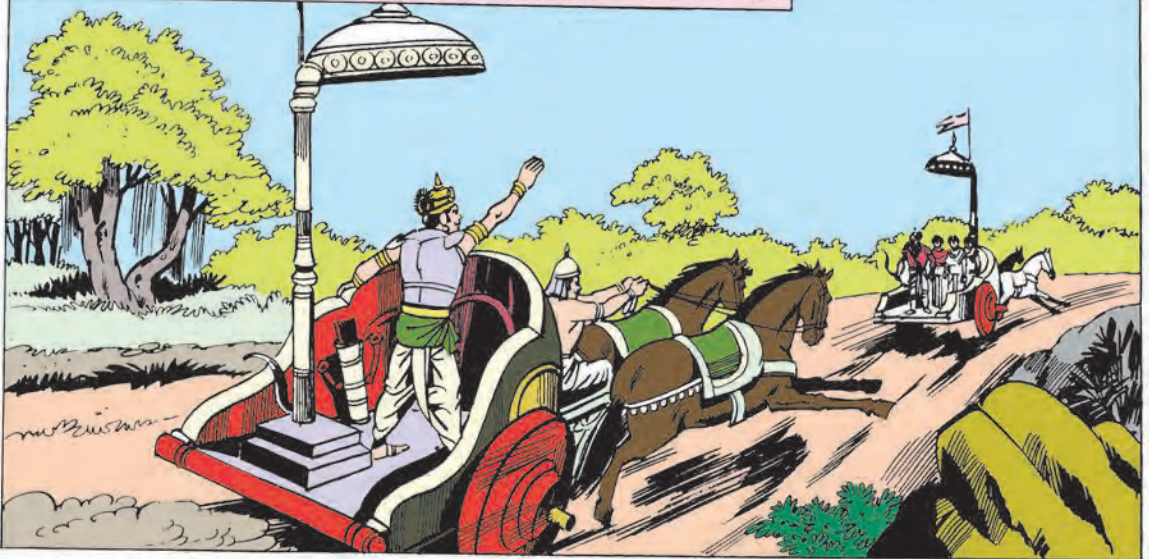
THE BATTLE RAGED SO FIERCE, WITH CLASHING WEAPONS AND FLYING MISSILES, THAT IT STRUCK TERROR IN THE HEARTS OF EVEN THOSE WHO WERE MERE SPECTATORS.

IN NO TIME, THE GROUND WAS STREWN WITH HEADS SEVERED FROM BODIES, FLAGSTAFFS FROM CHARIOTS, AND ARMOUR FROM HEAVING CHESTS.

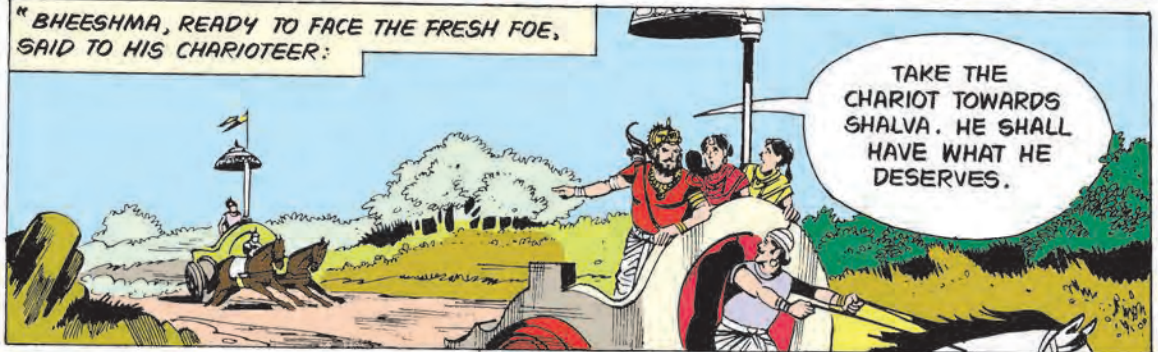
AND SUCH WAS THE PROWESS OF BHEESHMA THAT EVEN THE ENEMIES WHO CAME TO FIGHT HIM REMAINED TO APPLAUD.



"AS THE VICTORIOUS BHEESHMA TURNED HIS CHARIOT TOWARDS HASTINAPURA, SHALVA, THE KING OF SAUBHA, CHALLENGED HIM TO SINGLE COMBAT.



"BHEESHMA, READY TO FACE THE FRESH FOE, SAID TO HIS CHARIOTEER:



"BHEESHMA SLEW SHALVA'S STEEDS AND CHARIOTEER, BUT SPARED HIS LIFE, AND PROCEEDED WITH THE MAIDENS TOWARDS HASTINAPURA.



"RUTHLESS ON THE BATTLEFIELD, BHEESHMA WAS FULL OF TENDERNESS WHEN IT CAME TO LOOKING AFTER THE MAIDENS AS HE BROUGHT THEM TO VICHITRAVEERYA.



"WHEN THE DETAILS OF THE WEDDING WERE SETTLED BY BHEESHMA AND APPROVED BY SATYAVATI, AMBA, THE ELDEST OF THE MAIDENS, SAID TO BHEESHMA:

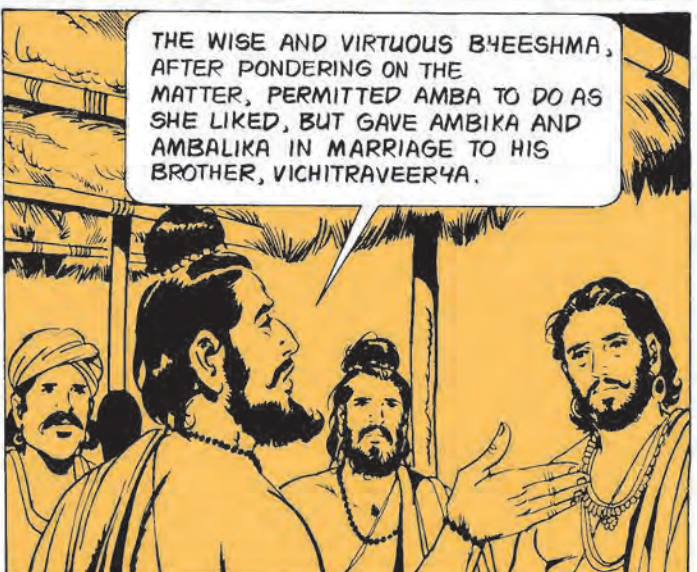
EVEN BEFORE THE SWAYAMVARA WAS HELD, I HAD CHOSEN THE KING OF SAUBHA. HE HAD ACCEPTED AND MY FATHER HAD APPROVED.

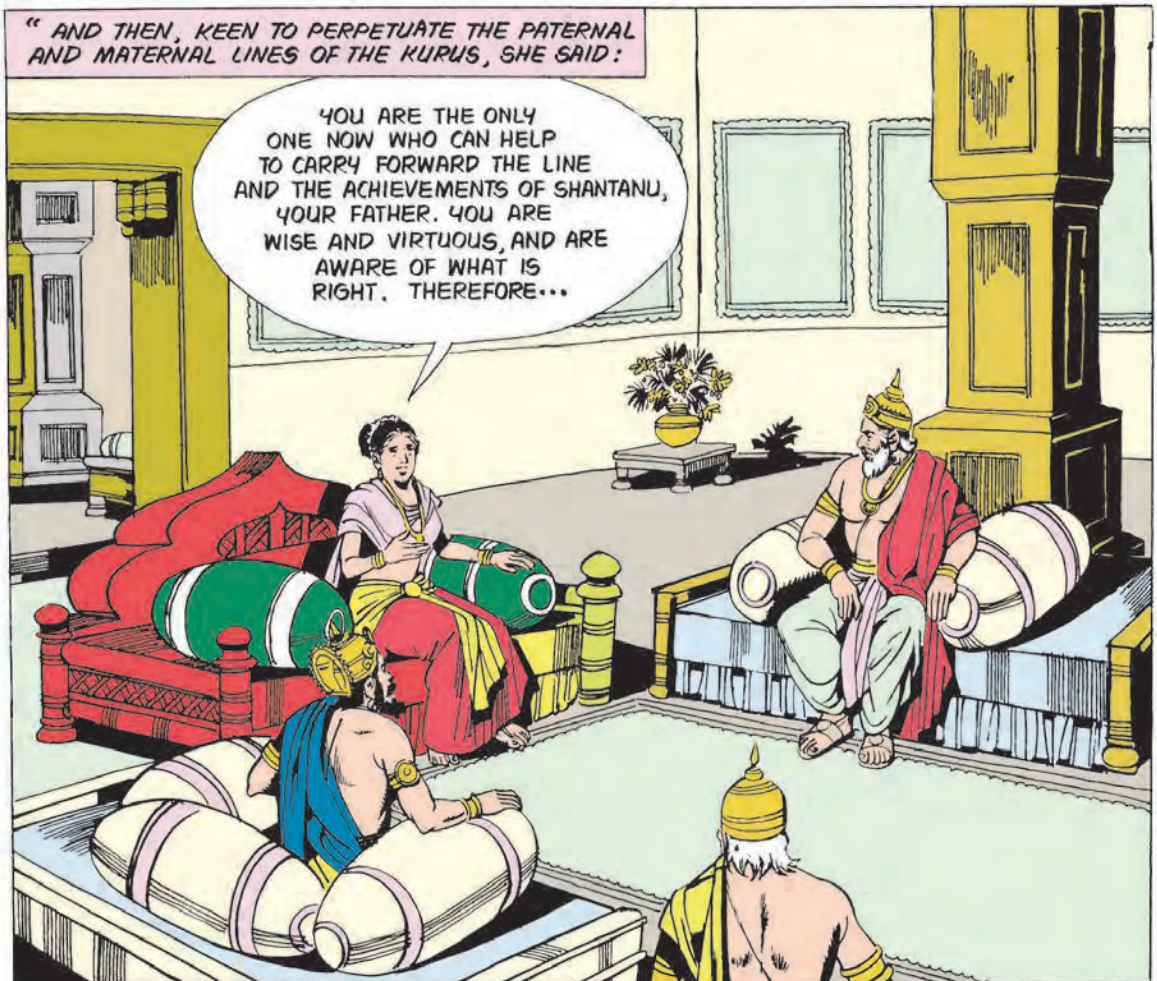
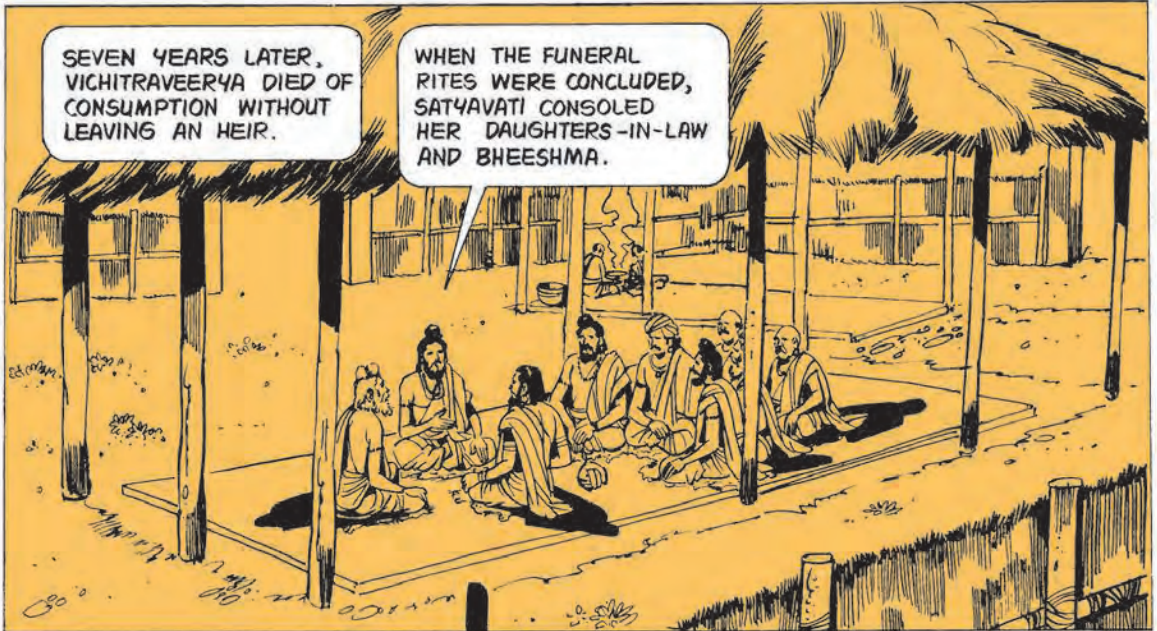


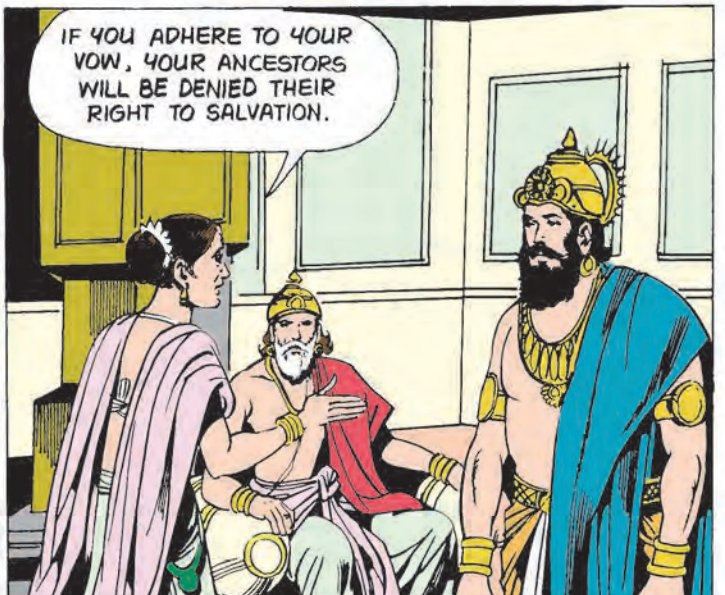
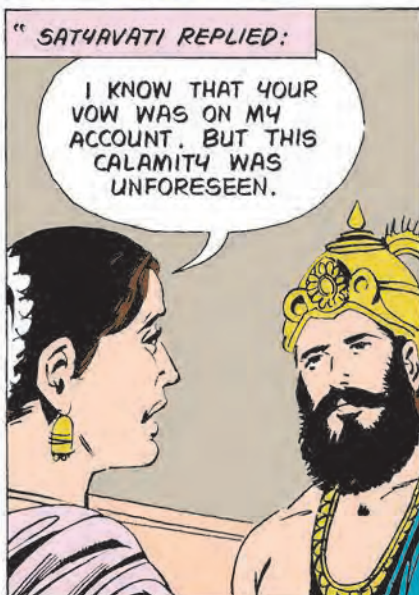
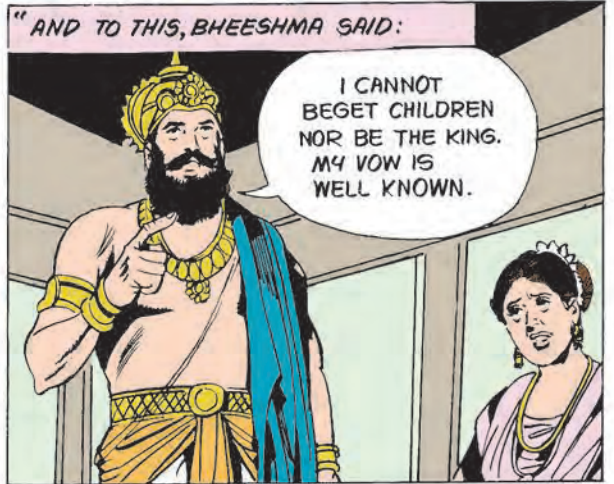
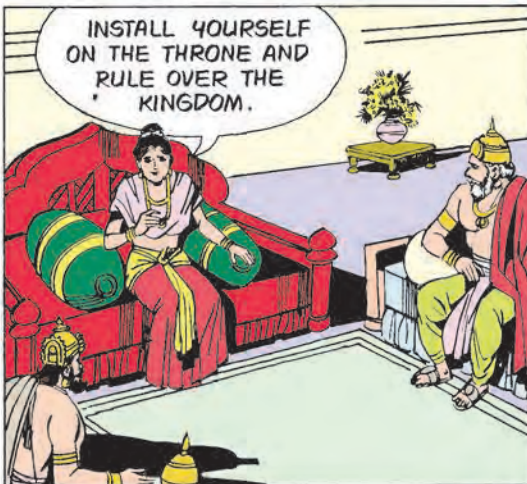
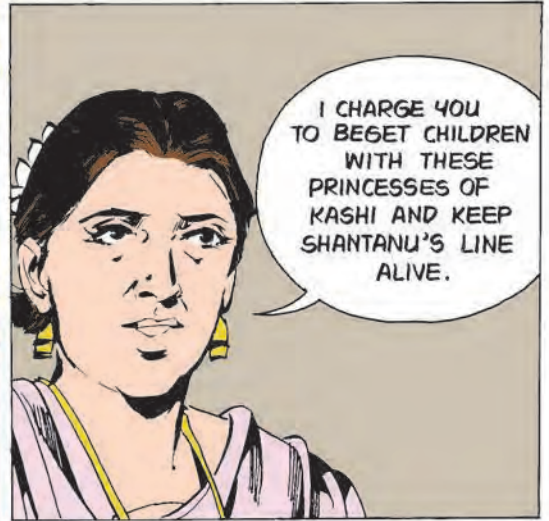
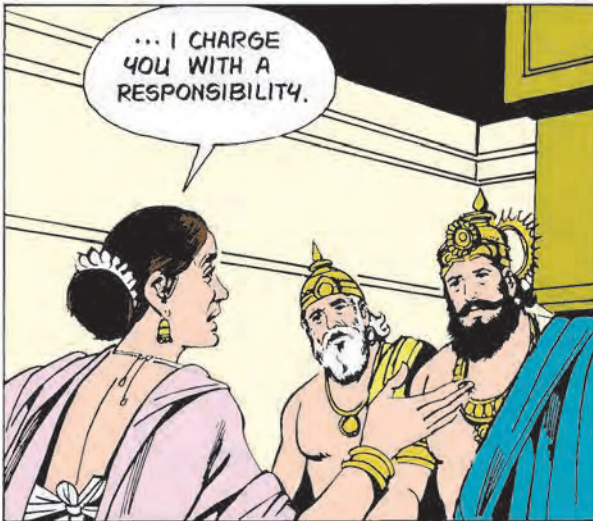
NOW THAT YOU KNOW THIS, DO AS YOU CHOOSE.



THE WISE AND VIRTUOUS BHEESHMA, AFTER PONDERING ON THE MATTER, PERMITTED AMBA TO DO AS SHE LIKED, BUT GAVE AMBIKA AND AMBALIKA IN MARRIAGE TO HIS BROTHER, VICHITRAVEERYA.

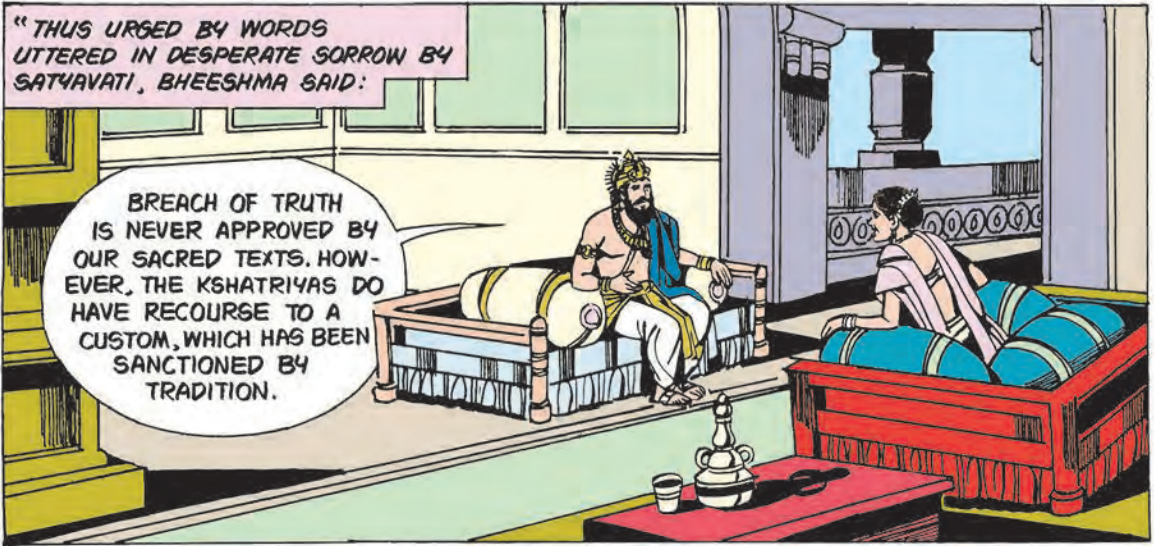




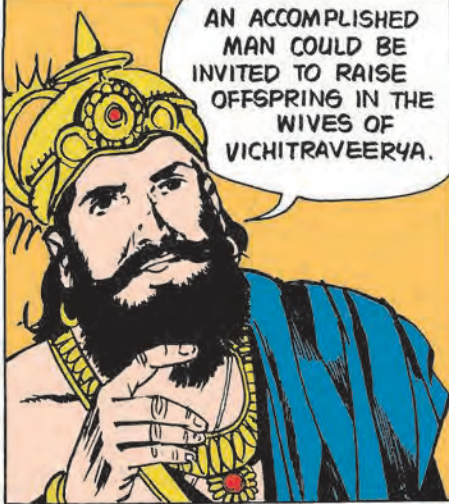


"THUS URGED BY WORDS
UTTERED IN DESPERATE SORROW BY
SATYAVATI, BHEESHMA SAID:

BREACH OF TRUTH
IS NEVER APPROVED BY
OUR SACRED TEXTS. HOW-
EVER, THE KSHATRIYAS DO
HAVE RECOURSE TO A
CUSTOM, WHICH HAS BEEN
SANCTIONED BY
TRADITION.



AN ACCOMPLISHED
MAN COULD BE
INVITED TO RAISE
OFFSPRING IN THE
WIVES OF
VICHITRAVEERYA.



"SATYAVATI SMILING BASHFULLY THEN SAID:

O PRINCE, IN OUR
RACE YOU ARE VIRTUE,
YOU ARE TRUTH, YOU
ARE OUR SOLE REFUGE.
THEREFORE, LISTEN TO
MY STORY AND DO
WHAT IS PROPER.

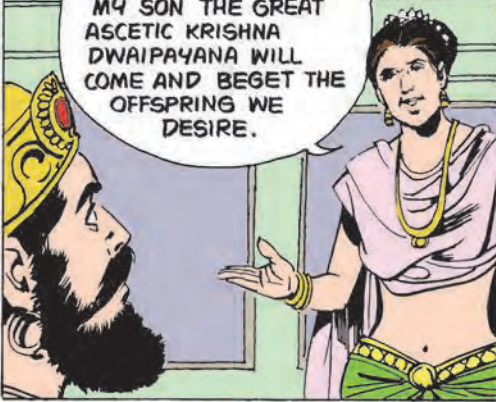


AND SATYAVATI TOLD BHEESHMA
IN PRIVATE OF HOW SHE MET
PARASHARA WHEN SHE WAS A
MAIDEN AND OF THE SON, KRISHNA
DWAIPAYANA, BORN TO THEM. THE
SON WHO IS VYASA, MY GURU.



"AND THEN SATYAVATI SAID:

IF YOU APPROVE
OF IT, O BHEESHMA,
MY SON THE GREAT
ASCETIC KRISHNA
DWAIPAYANA WILL
COME AND BEGET THE
OFFSPRING WE
DESIRE.



"AT THE MENTION OF MY GURU'S NAME, BHEESHMA JOINED HIS PALMS AND SAID:

O QUEEN, WHAT YOU HAVE
SUGGESTED IS IN KEEPING
WITH PROPRIETY, AND HAS
MY FULL APPROVAL.
FOR...



...THE ACTS OF AN
INTELLIGENT MAN, ARISING
FROM DEEP AND
PATIENT THOUGHT WILL
ONLY LEAD VIRTUE
TO GREATER
VIRTUE.



"AND WHEN BHEESHMA SAID THIS, SATYAVATI THOUGHT OF SAGE DWAIPAYANA...

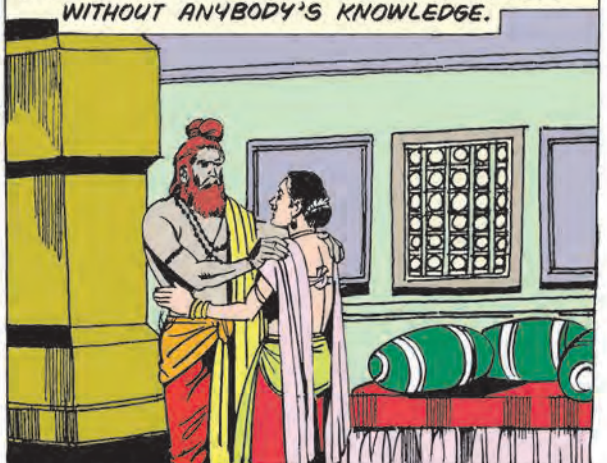


...WHO WAS THEN ENGAGED IN
INTERPRETING THE VEDAS.

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुः...।
एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति...



"DIVINING THAT HE WAS NEEDED BY HIS
MOTHER MY GURU CAME INSTANTLY TO HER
WITHOUT ANYBODY'S KNOWLEDGE.



* THEY ADDRESS HIM AS INDRA, MITRA, VARUNA AND AGNI. THE ONE REALITY IS CALLED BY VARIOUS NAMES BY THE SAGES — RIG VEDA 1-164-45

"SEEING HER SON AFTER A LAPSE OF SO MANY YEARS, SATYAVATI WEPT BITTERLY AND HER FIRST-BORN WIPED HER TEARS SAYING:



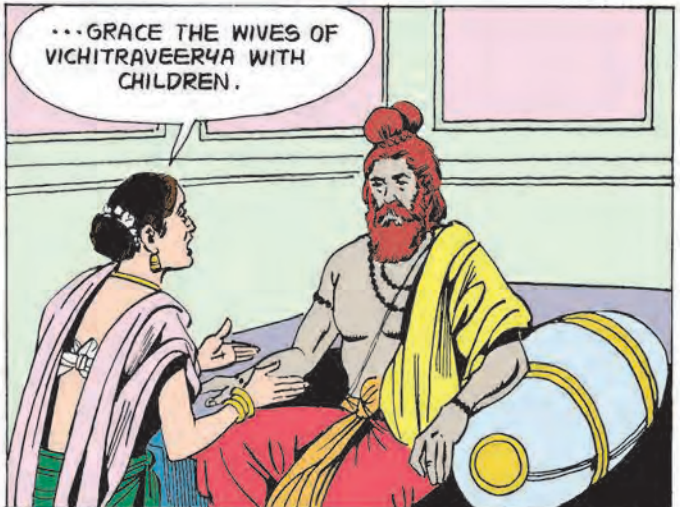
"BIDDING VYASA TO SIT DOWN, SATYAVATI SAID:



FOR THE LOVE OF VICHITRAVEERYA, WHO IS AS MUCH YOUR BROTHER AS BHEESHMA, AND FOR OUR DYNASTY, AND FOR THE PEOPLE...



...GRACE THE WIVES OF VICHITRAVEERYA WITH CHILDREN.



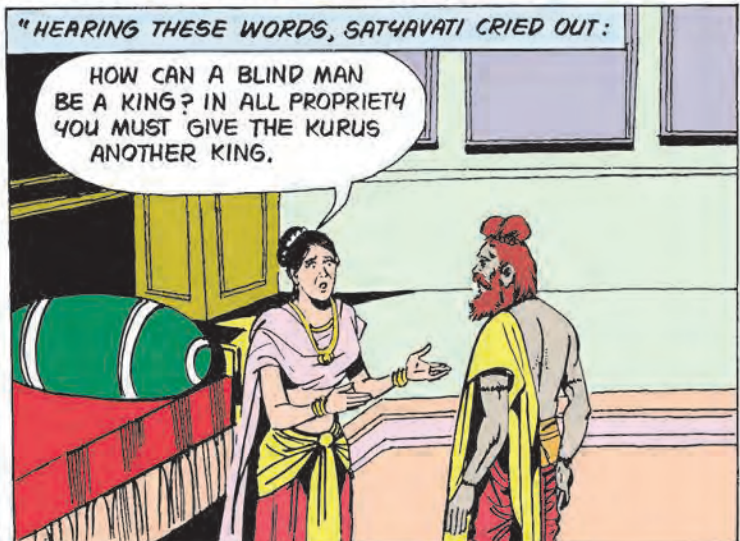
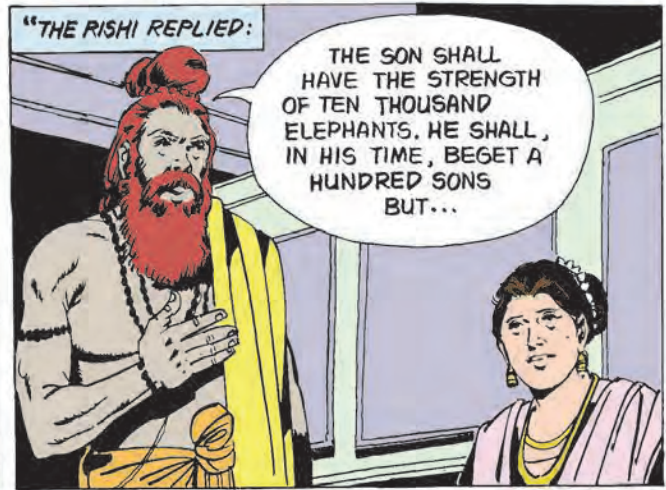
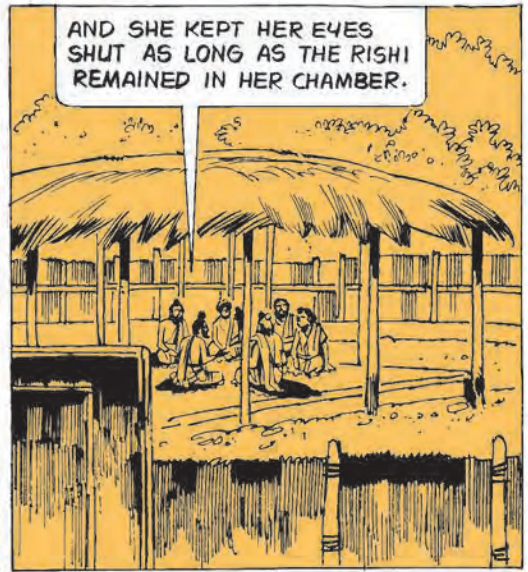
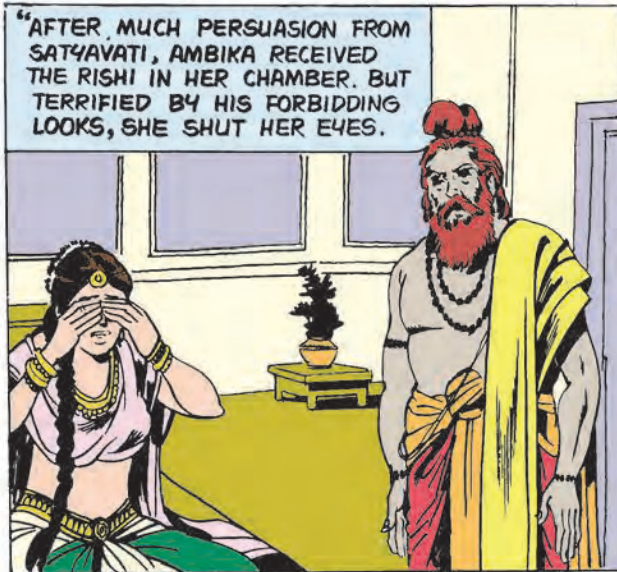
"VYASA REPLIED:

I SHALL CARRY OUT YOUR ORDERS WITH A SPOTLESS MIND.



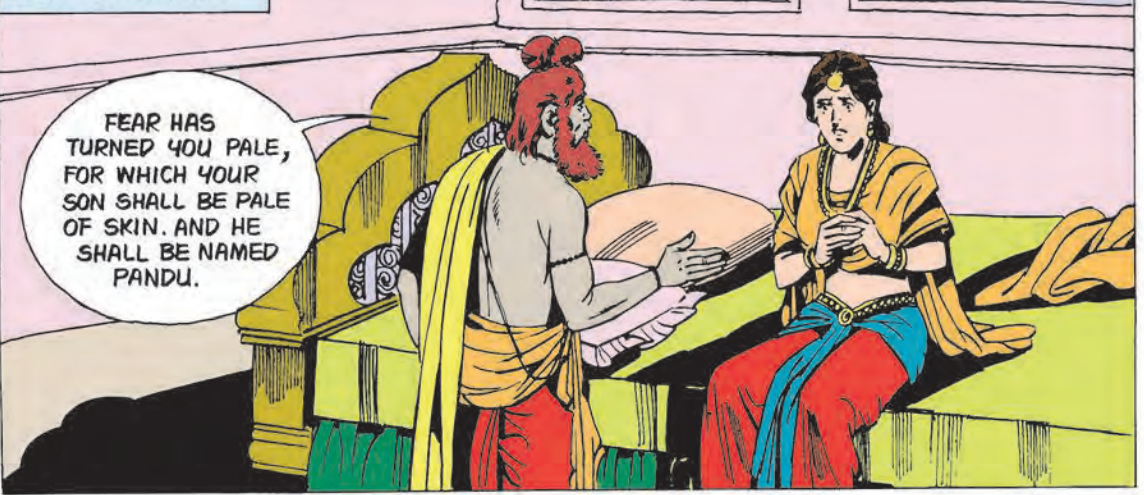
EACH PRINCESS SHALL CONCEIVE A NOBLE SON, IF SHE IS PATIENT WITH MY STRONG ODOUR, UGLY FACE AND UNKEMPT APPEARANCE.





"SO, AFTER THE BIRTH OF THE BLIND SON, DHRITARASHTRA, VYASA APPROACHED AMBALIKA, THE YOUNGER PRINCESS, GRIPPED BY FEAR AT THE SIGHT OF THE RISHI, SHE TURNED PALE, AND VYASA SAID:

FEAR HAS
TURNED YOU PALE,
FOR WHICH YOUR
SON SHALL BE PALE
OF SKIN. AND HE
SHALL BE NAMED
PANDU.



DISAPPOINTED A SECOND TIME,
SATYAVATI BEGGED OF THE RISHI
FOR ANOTHER CHILD BY AMBIKA. BUT
WHEN THE TIME CAME, THE SELF-
WILLED AMBIKA SENT IN HER MAID,
DECKED IN HER OWN ORNAMENTS,
TO RECEIVE THE SAGE. THE MAID
WAITED UPON HIM WITH RESPECT
AND REVERENCE.



"THE SAGE WAS PLEASED AND SAID:

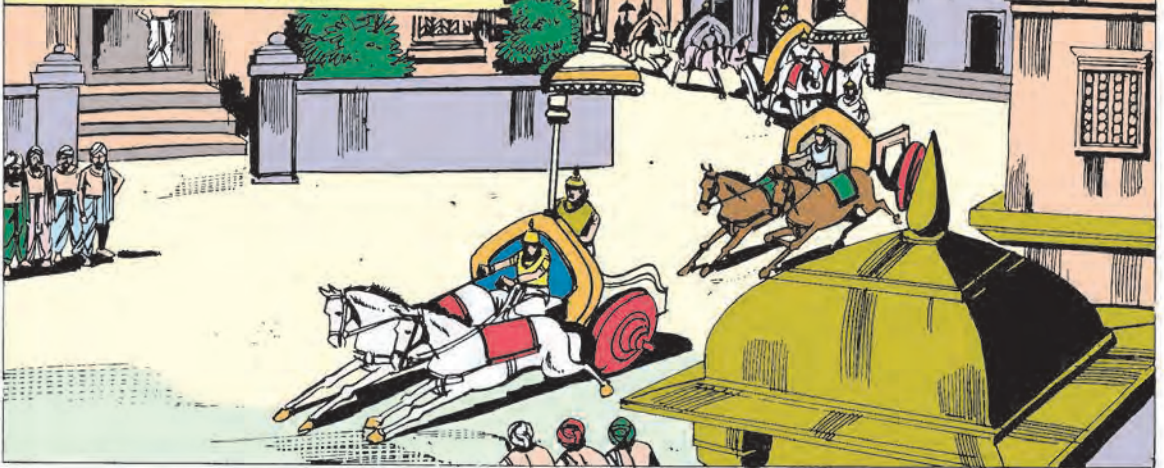
YOU SHALL
NO LONGER BE A
SLAVE. AND THE
CHILD THAT YOU
BEAR SHALL BE
INTELLIGENT
AND WISE.



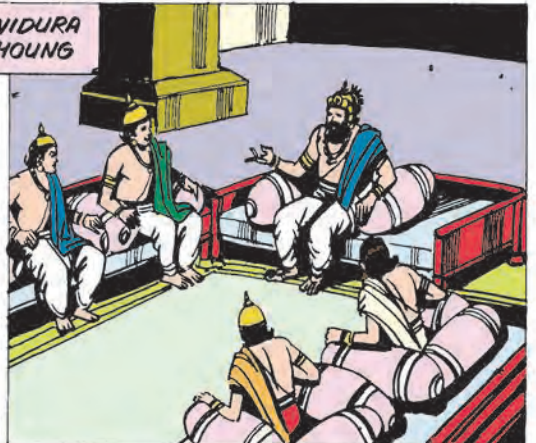
AND THE SON BORN TO HER
BY THE GRACE OF MY GURU
VYASA WAS VIDURA, THE
BROTHER OF DHRITARASHTRA
AND PANDU, THE PROPAGA-
TORS OF THE KURU RACE.



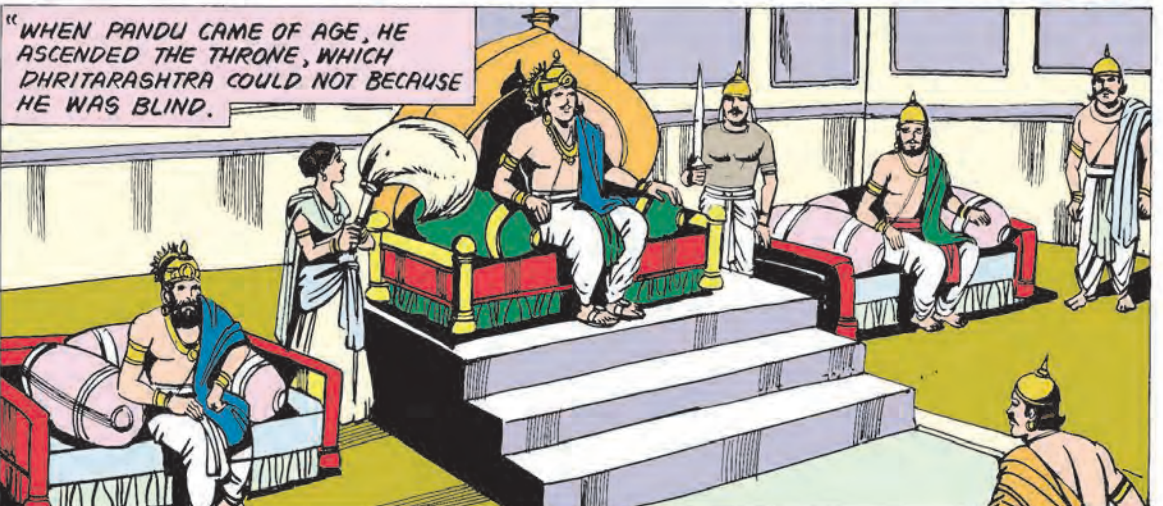
"AND WITH THE AUSPICIOUS BIRTH OF THESE CHILDREN, KURUJANGALA AND THE KURUS GREW IN PROSPERITY. O MONARCH, UNDER THE JUST RULE OF BHEESHMA, THE LAND PROSPERED IN PEACE AND PLENTY, ATTRACTING SETTLERS FROM OTHER KINGDOMS WHO SWELLED THE POPULATION.



"BHEESHMA RAISED DHRITARASHTRA, PANDU AND VIDURA AS HIS OWN SONS, AND THEY GREW UP INTO FINE YOUNG MEN, ACCOMPLISHED SCHOLARS AND SOLDIERS.



"WHEN PANDU CAME OF AGE, HE ASCENDED THE THRONE, WHICH DHRITARASHTRA COULD NOT BECAUSE HE WAS BLIND.

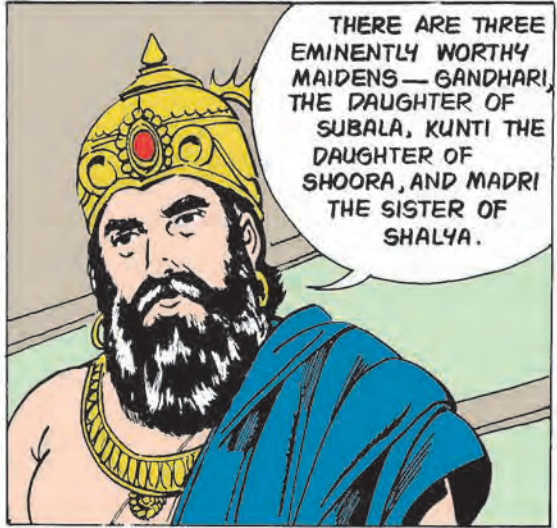


"THEN ONE DAY, BHEESHMA SAID TO THE WISE AND LEARNED VIDURA:

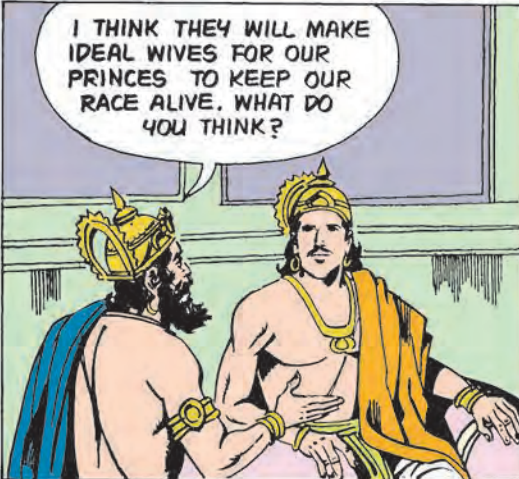
THE TIME IS RIPE FOR US TO PLAN THE FUTURE OF OUR DYNASTY.



THERE ARE THREE EMINENTLY WORTHY MAIDENS — GANDHARI, THE DAUGHTER OF SUBALA, KUNTI THE DAUGHTER OF SHOORA, AND MADRI THE SISTER OF SHALYA.

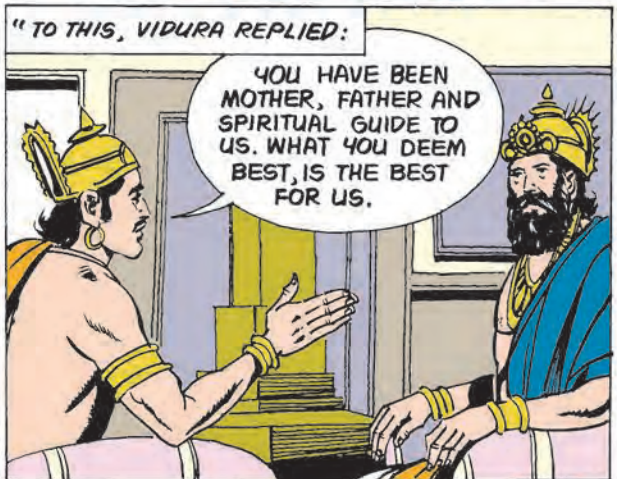


I THINK THEY WILL MAKE IDEAL WIVES FOR OUR PRINCES TO KEEP OUR RACE ALIVE. WHAT DO YOU THINK?



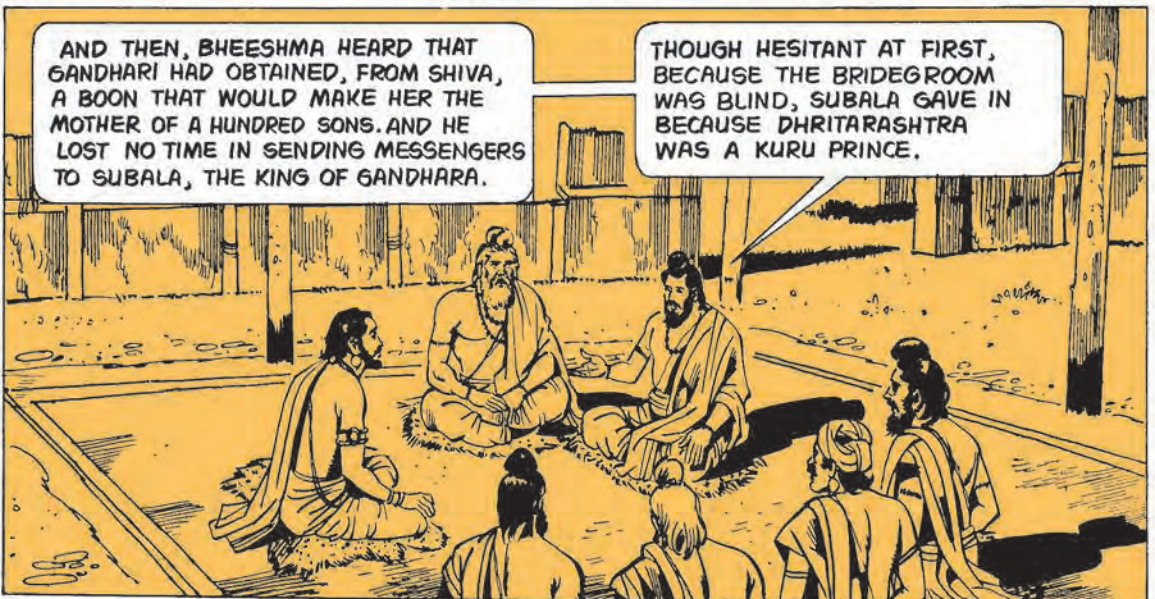
"TO THIS, VIDURA REPLIED:

YOU HAVE BEEN MOTHER, FATHER AND SPIRITUAL GUIDE TO US. WHAT YOU DEEM BEST, IS THE BEST FOR US.

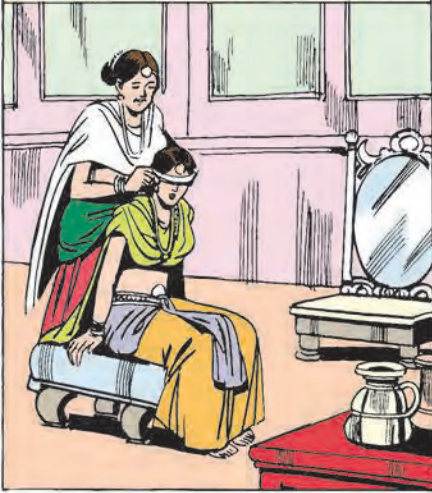


AND THEN, BHEESHMA HEARD THAT GANDHARI HAD OBTAINED, FROM SHIVA, A BOON THAT WOULD MAKE HER THE MOTHER OF A HUNDRED SONS. AND HE LOST NO TIME IN SENDING MESSENGERS TO SUBALA, THE KING OF GANDHARA.

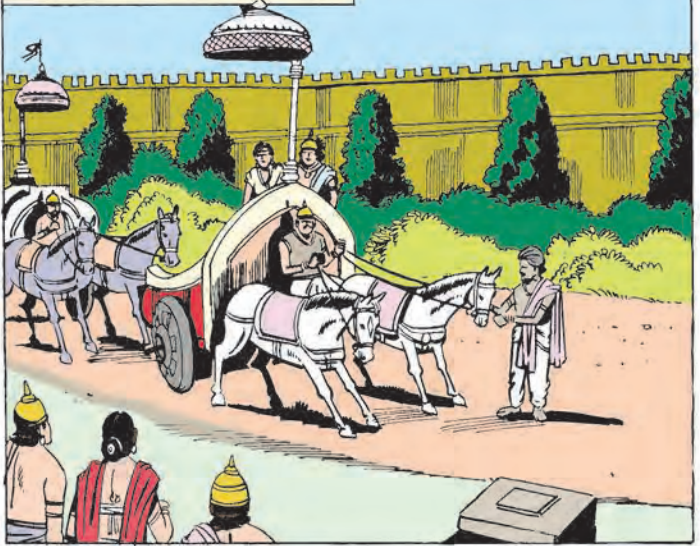
THOUGH HESITANT AT FIRST, BECAUSE THE BRIDEGROOM WAS BLIND, SUBALA GAVE IN BECAUSE DHRTARASHTRA WAS A KURU PRINCE.



"WHEN GANDHARI HEARD THAT SHE WAS TO BE MARRIED TO A BLIND PRINCE, SHE BLINDFOLDED HERSELF IN A GESTURE OF LOVE AND RESPECT.



"SHAKUNI, THE SON OF SUBALA, ESCORTED HIS SISTER TO THE LAND OF THE KURUS...



"...WHERE SHE WAS RESPECTFULLY RECEIVED.



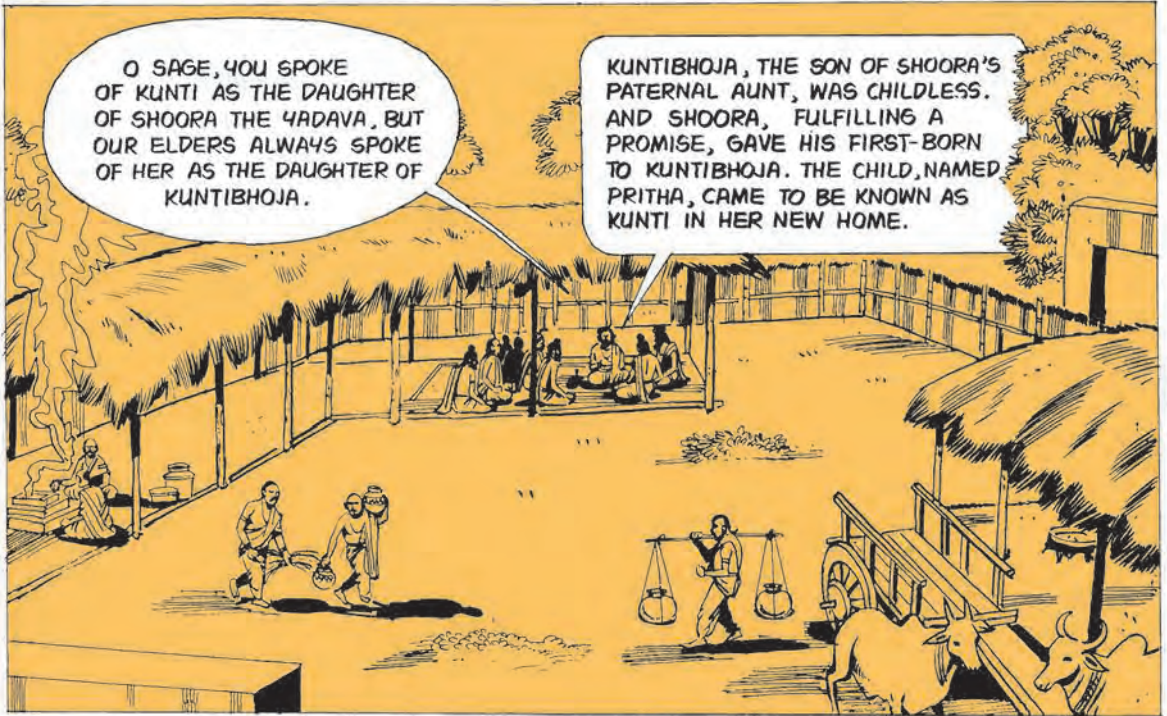
"AND THERE, UNDER BHEESHMA'S DIRECTIONS, THE WEDDING OF DHRITARASHTRA AND GANDHARI WAS CELEBRATED WITH GREAT POMP.



THEN SHAKUNI, HAVING GIVEN AWAY HIS SISTER ALONG WITH MANY VALUABLE ROBES, RETURNED TO GANDHARA.

THUS DID DHRITARASHTRA OBTAIN THE DAUGHTER OF SUBALA FOR A WIFE.



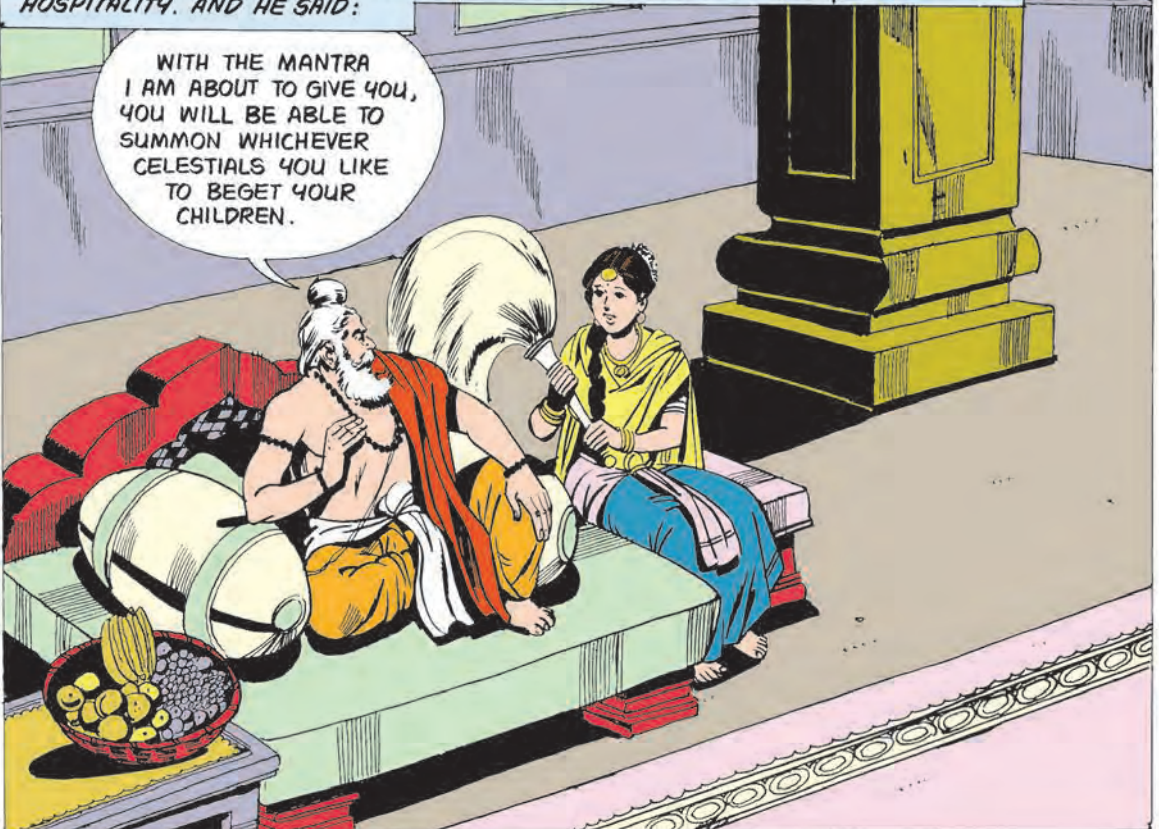


O SAGE, YOU SPOKE OF KUNTI AS THE DAUGHTER OF SHOORA THE YADAVA, BUT OUR ELDERS ALWAYS SPOKE OF HER AS THE DAUGHTER OF KUNTIBHOJA.

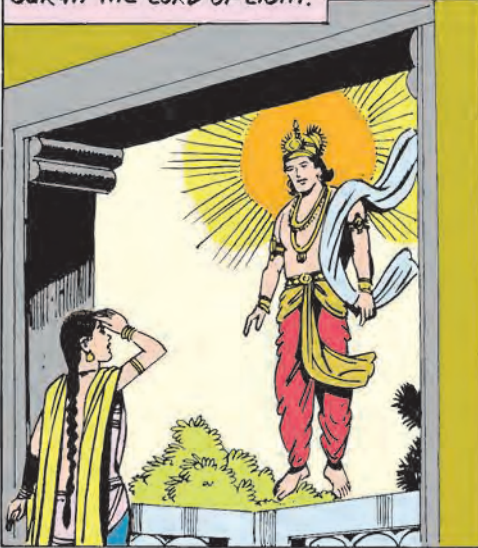
KUNTIBHOJA, THE SON OF SHOORA'S PATERNAL AUNT, WAS CHILDLESS. AND SHOORA, FULFILLING A PROMISE, GAVE HIS FIRST-BORN TO KUNTIBHOJA. THE CHILD, NAMED PRITHA, CAME TO BE KNOWN AS KUNTI IN HER NEW HOME.

"THERE IT WAS HER DUTY TO ATTEND UPON REVERED GUESTS. ONCE, WHILE YET A YOUNG GIRL, SHE PLEASSED THE STERN SEER, DURVASA, WITH HER PATIENT HOSPITALITY. AND HE SAID:

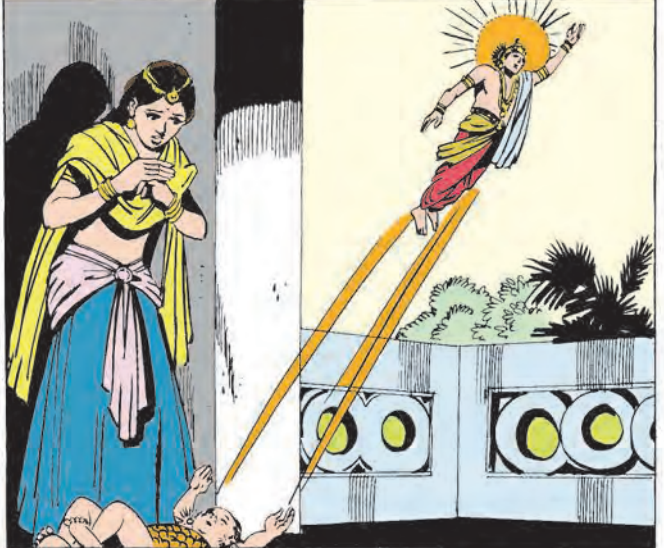
WITH THE MANTRA I AM ABOUT TO GIVE YOU, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SUMMON WHICHEVER CELESTIALS YOU LIKE TO BEGET YOUR CHILDREN.



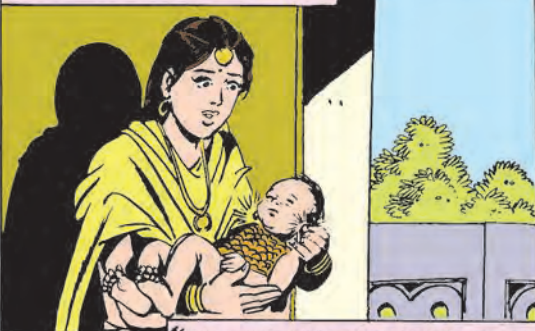
"AS SOON AS DURVASA WENT AWAY, THE CURIOUS PRINCESS, TO SEE IF THE MANTRA WOULD WORK, SUMMONED SURYA THE LORD OF LIGHT.



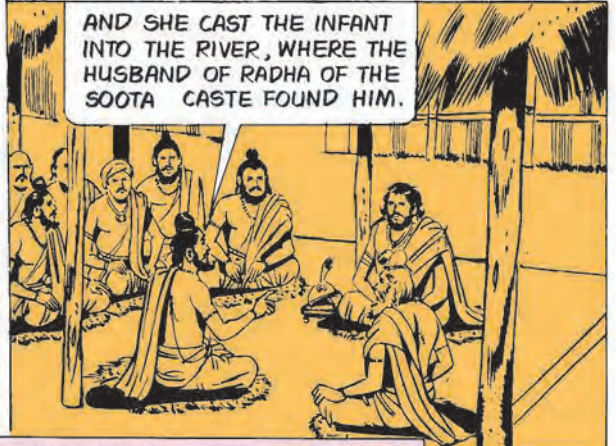
"AND A SON WAS BORN TO HER, CLAD IN ARMOUR AND DECKED WITH EARRINGS — THE SON WHO LATER BECAME KNOWN IN THE WORLD AS KARNA.



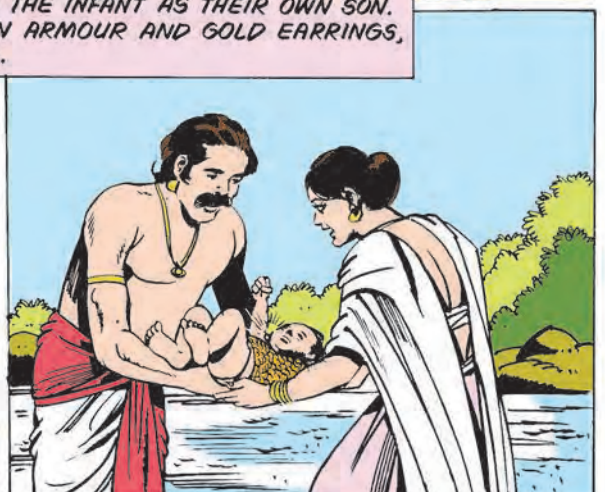
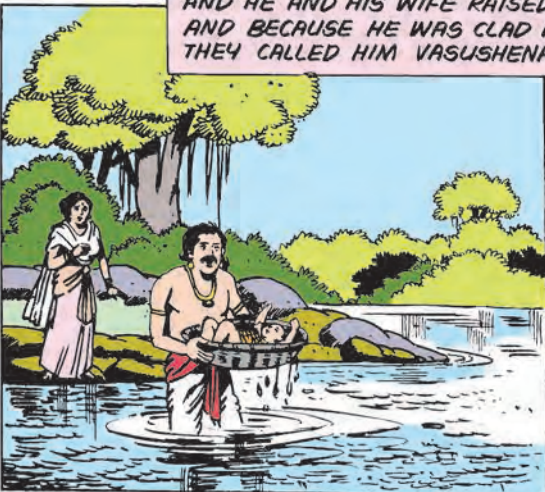
"DISTRESSED BY THE BIRTH OF A SON IN HER MAIDENHOOD, AND AFRAID OF HER RELATIVES, KUNTI THOUGHT DEEPLY ON WHAT WAS BEST FOR HER TO DO.



AND SHE CAST THE INFANT INTO THE RIVER, WHERE THE HUSBAND OF RADHA OF THE SOOTA CASTE FOUND HIM.



"AND HE AND HIS WIFE RAISED THE INFANT AS THEIR OWN SON. AND BECAUSE HE WAS CLAD IN ARMOUR AND GOLD EARRINGS, THEY CALLED HIM VASUSHENA.



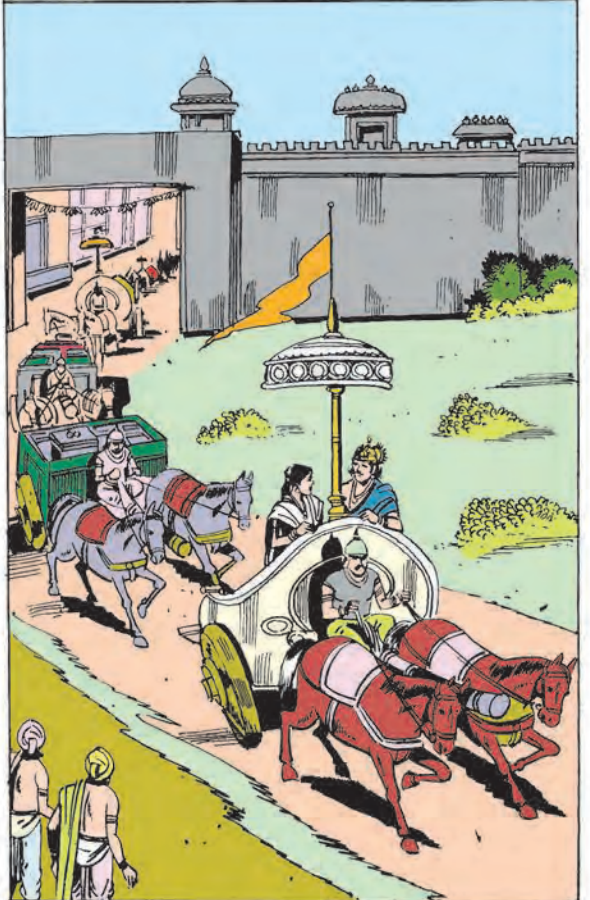
"MEANWHILE, KUNTIBHOJA INVITED SEVERAL PRINCES AND KINGS SO THAT KUNTI COULD SELECT A HUSBAND FROM AMONG THEM. AND KUNTI BEHELD PANDU, THE NOBLEST IN THE ROYAL ASSEMBLY.



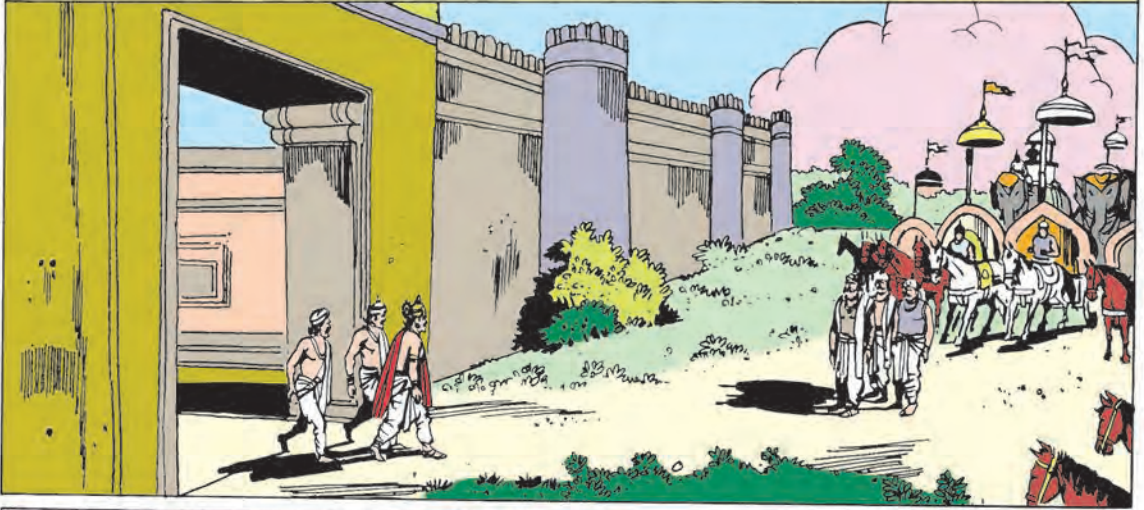
"PANDU, THE SCION OF THE KURU RACE, MAGNIFICENT LIKE ANOTHER INDRA IN HIS ROYAL SPLENDOUR, ATTRACTED KUNTI. AND WITH BECOMING MODESTY, SHE ADVANCED TOWARDS HIM AND GARLANDED HIM.



"AFTER THE WEDDING, KUNTIBHOJA PRESENTED HIS SON-IN-LAW WITH MANY VALUABLE GIFTS. PANDU, ALONG WITH KUNTI, THEN RETURNED TO HASTINAPURA.



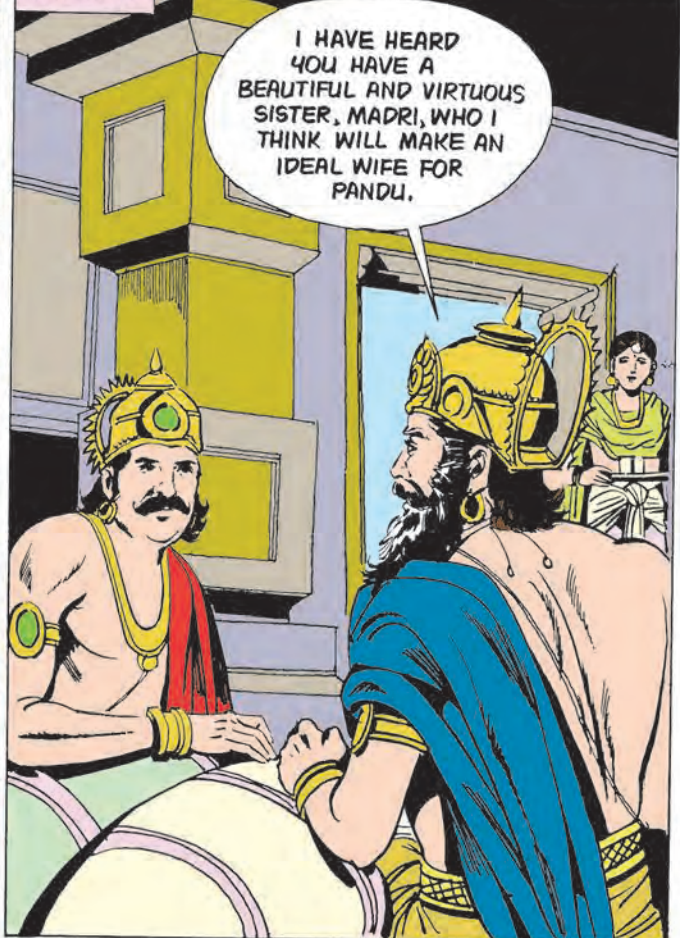
"BHEESHMA THEN DECIDED THAT PANDU SHOULD HAVE A SECOND WIFE, AND HE THOUGHT OF MADRI THE SISTER OF SHALYA, KING OF MADRA. HE PROCEEDED TO THE CAPITAL OF THE MADRA KING, TAKING WITH HIM WISE COUNSELLORS, A VAST ARMY AND GREAT WEALTH.

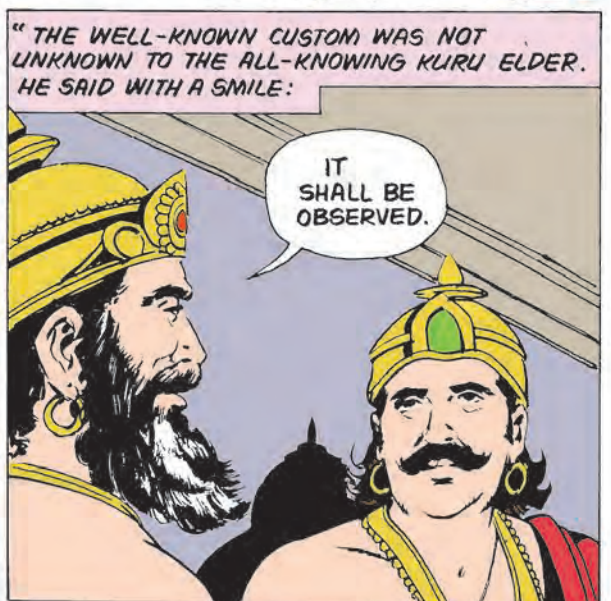
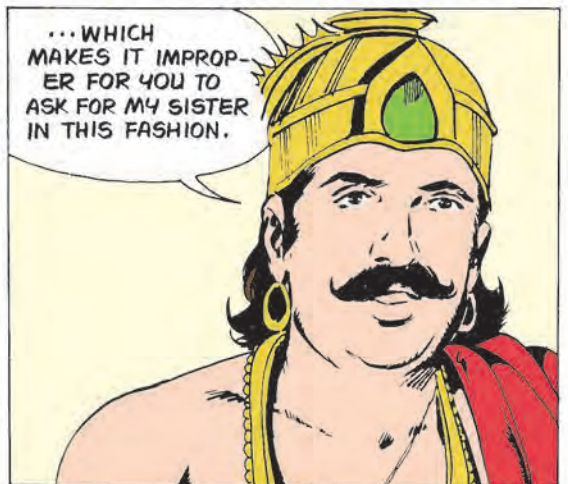
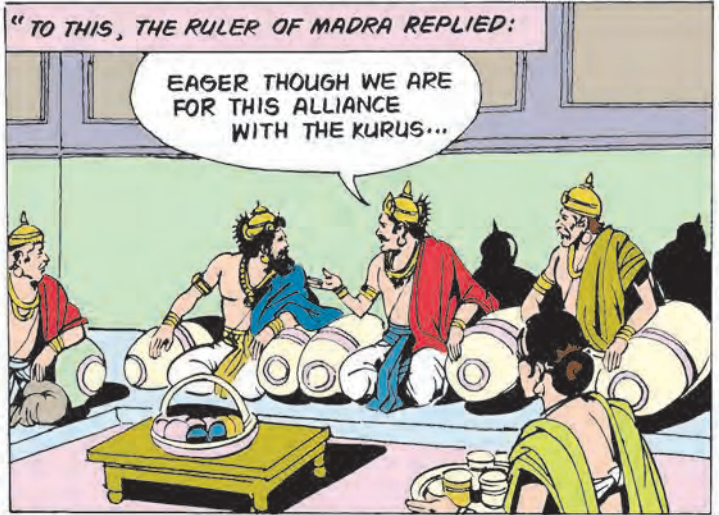
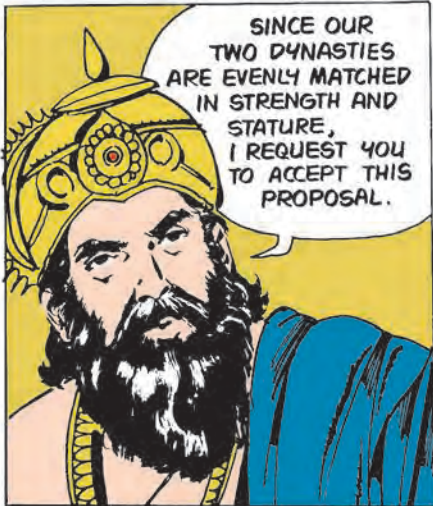


"SHALYA RECEIVED BHEESHMA WITH THE RESPECT DUE TO HIM, AND THEN...



"... ASKED HIM THE REASON FOR HIS VISIT. BHEESHMA REPLIED:





"AND BHEESHMA, CONFORMING TO THE MADRA CUSTOM, GAVE SHALYA UNTOLD WEALTH IN GOLD, PEARLS, CORALS, PRECIOUS STONES AND CLOTH, BESIDES ELEPHANTS, HORSES AND CHARIOTS. SHALYA READILY ACCEPTED THOSE PRECIOUS GIFTS AND...



"... GAVE AWAY HIS SISTER, DECKED IN ORNAMENTS, TO THE KURUS.



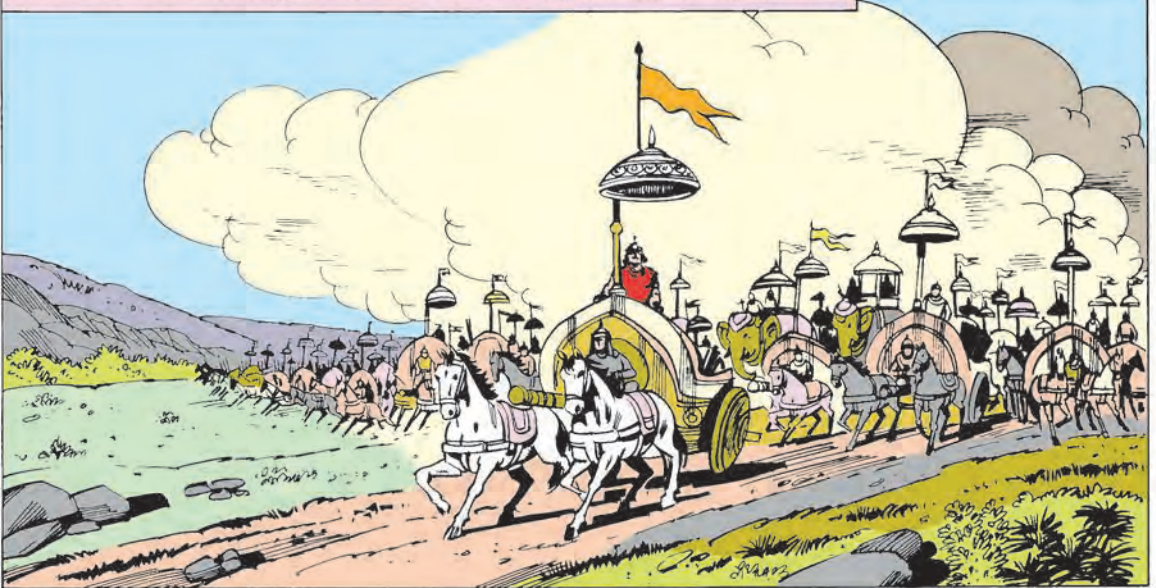
"PLEASSED WITH HIS MISSION, BHEESHMA RODE OUT TO HASTINAPURA WITH MADRI BY HIS SIDE



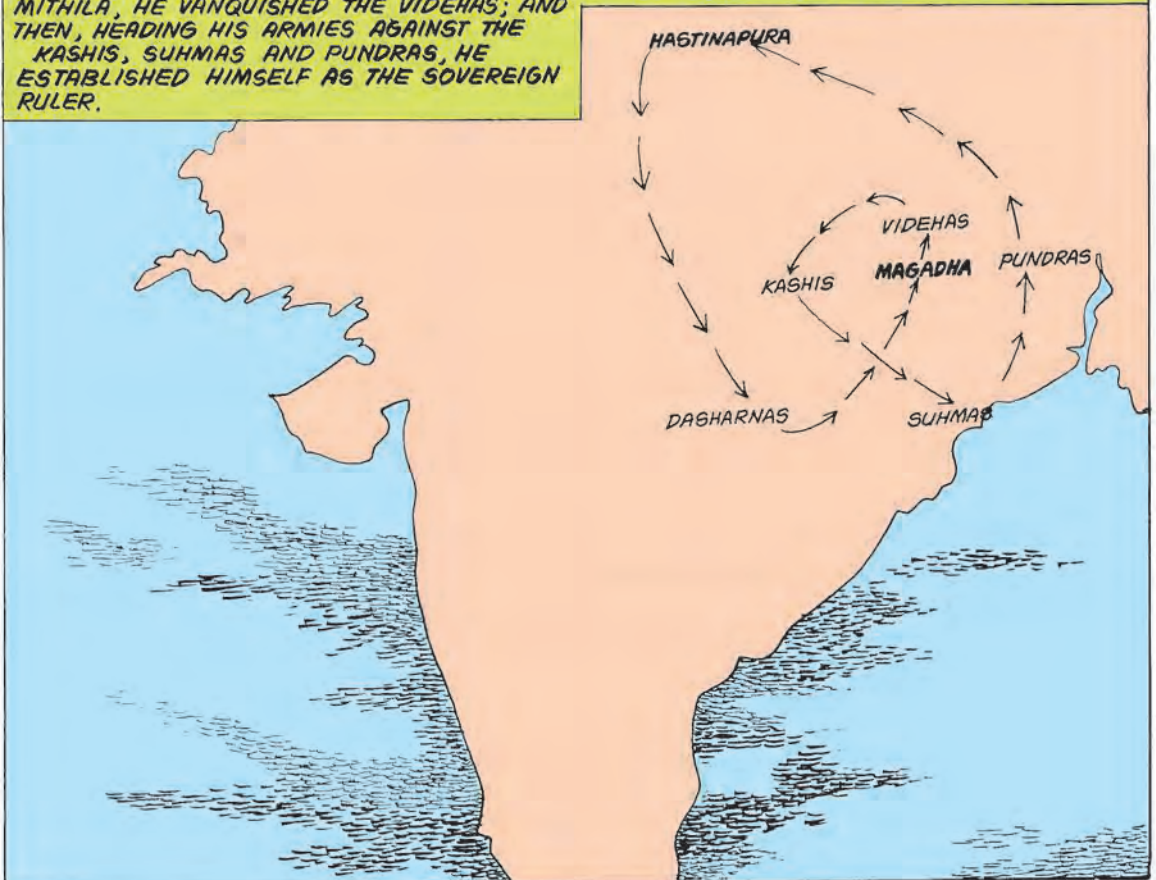
"LATER, ON AN AUSPICIOUS DAY AND MOMENT, PANDU WAS UNITED WITH MADRI.

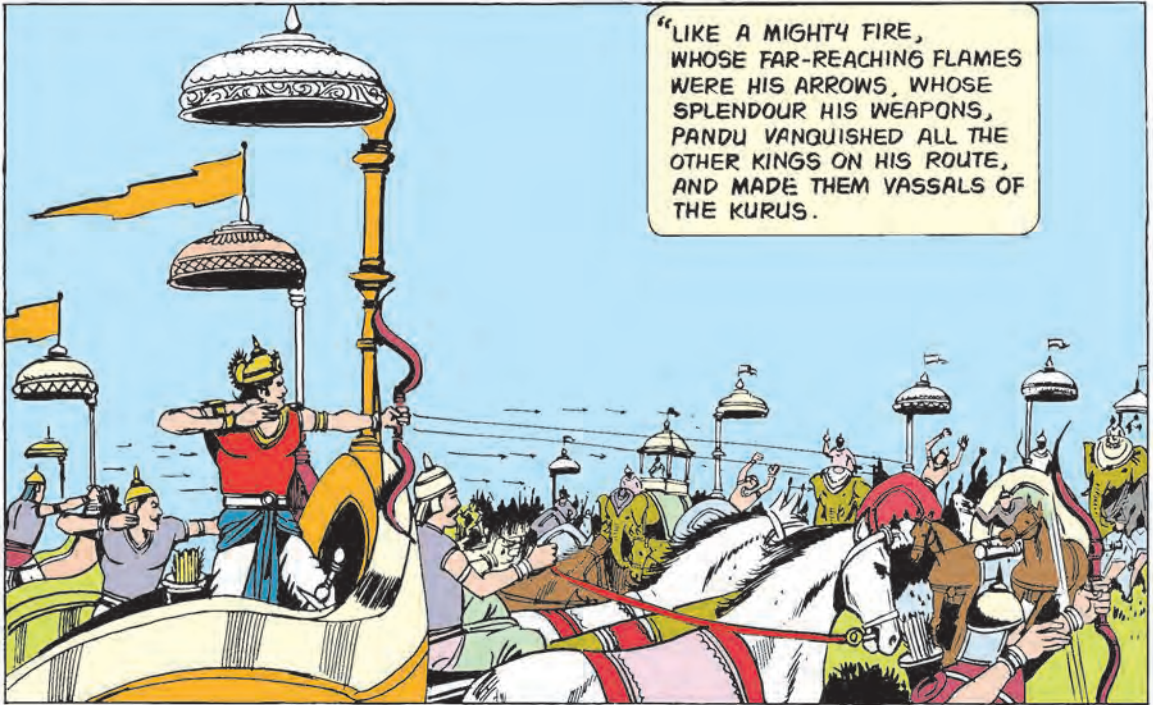


"PANDU SPENT THE NEXT THIRTY DAYS IN THE COMPANY OF HIS TWO WIVES. THEN WITH A WELL-EQUIPPED ARMY, HE SET OUT ON A CAMPAIGN OF CONQUEST."



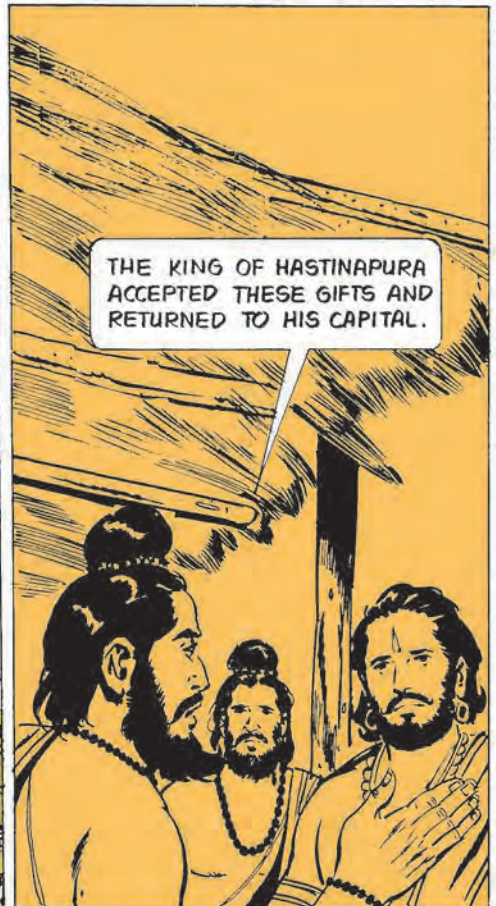
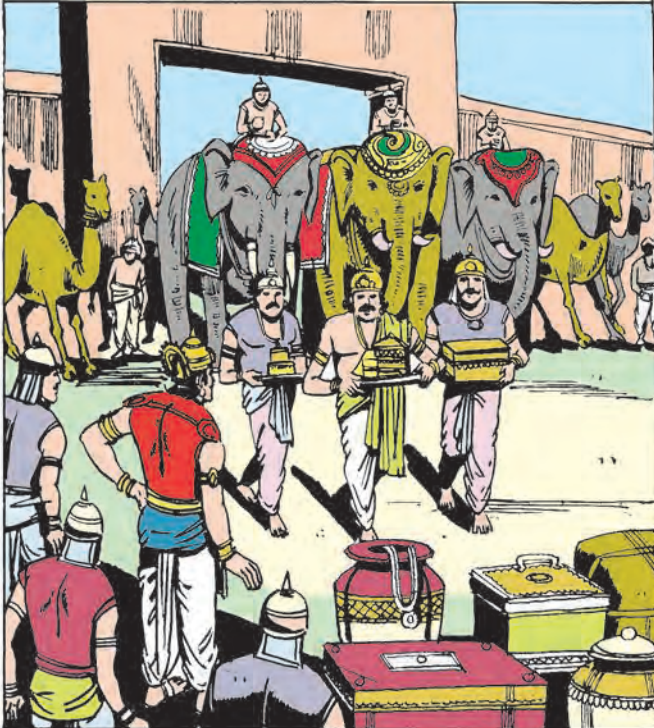
"HE FIRST SUBDUED THE DASHARNAS. THEN HE ATTACKED AND SLEW DEERGHAA, THE ARROGANT KING OF MAGADHA, AND RANSACKED HIS TREASURY. THEN, MARCHING INTO MITHILA, HE VANQUISHED THE VIDEHAS; AND THEN, HEADING HIS ARMIES AGAINST THE KASHIS, SUHMAS AND PUNDRAS, HE ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS THE SOVEREIGN RULER."





"LIKE A MIGHTY FIRE,
WHOSE FAR-REACHING FLAMES
WERE HIS ARROWS, WHOSE
SPLENDOUR HIS WEAPONS,
PANDU VANQUISHED ALL THE
OTHER KINGS ON HIS ROUTE,
AND MADE THEM VASSALS OF
THE KURUS."

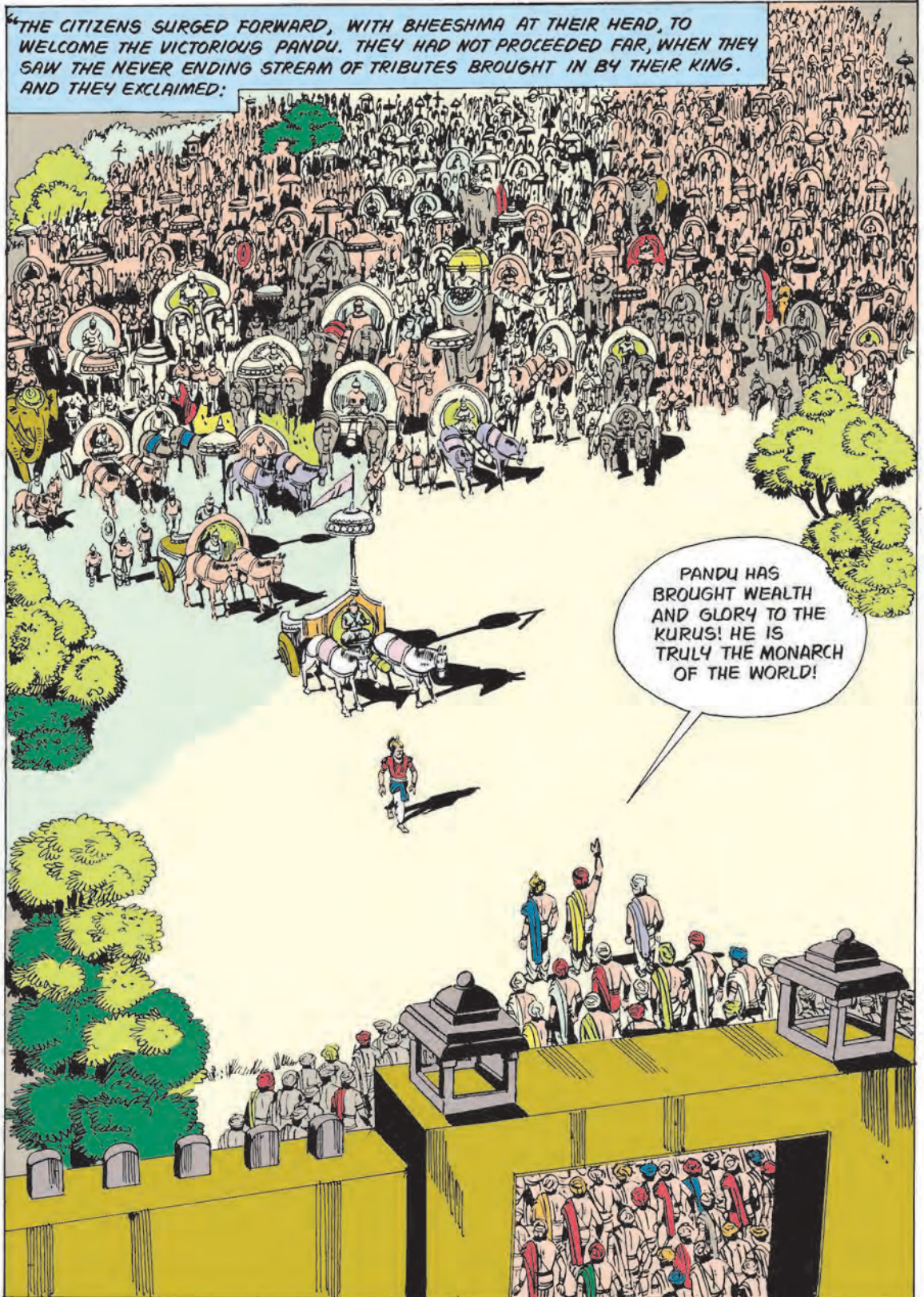
"AND THESE VASSAL KINGS BROUGHT HIM GIFTS OF
PRECIOUS STONES, PEARLS, CORALS, MUCH GOLD
AND SILVER, AND COWS AND HORSES AND FINE
CHARIOTS AND ELEPHANTS AND ASSES AND CAMELS
AND BUFFALOES AND GOATS AND SHEEP AND BLANKETS
AND BEAUTIFUL HIDES AND CLOTH WOVEN OUT OF FUR."



THE KING OF HASTINAPURA
ACCEPTED THESE GIFTS AND
RETURNED TO HIS CAPITAL.

THE CITIZENS SURGED FORWARD, WITH BHEESHMA AT THEIR HEAD, TO WELCOME THE VICTORIOUS PANDU. THEY HAD NOT PROCEEDED FAR, WHEN THEY SAW THE NEVER ENDING STREAM OF TRIBUTES BROUGHT IN BY THEIR KING. AND THEY EXCLAIMED:

PANDU HAS BROUGHT WEALTH AND GLORY TO THE KURUS! HE IS TRULY THE MONARCH OF THE WORLD!



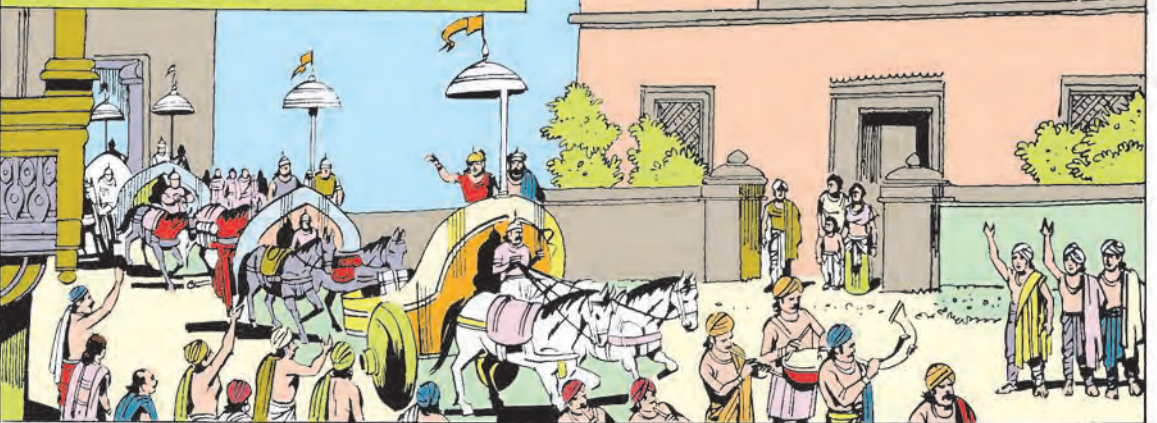
"AS SOON AS PANDU SAW BHEESHMA HE FELL AT HIS FEET."



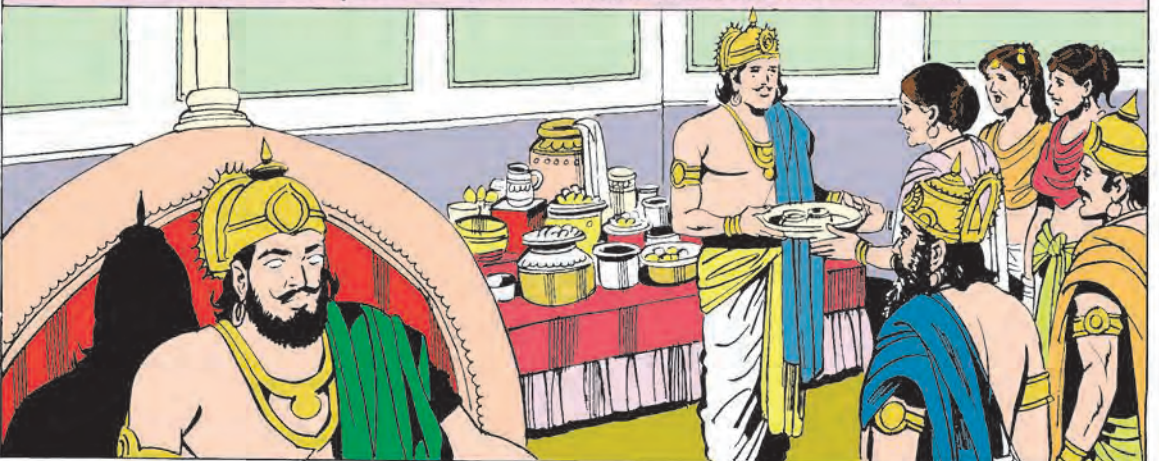
"AND BHEESHMA EMBRACED PANDU AND WEPT TEARS OF JOY."



"AND WITH A FLOURISH OF CONCHES AND TRUMPETS, THE TRIUMPHANT KING ENTERED HIS CAPITAL."



"THEN, AT THE COMMAND OF DHRTIRASHTRA, PANDU DISTRIBUTED THE WEALTH HE HAD ACQUIRED BY HIS VALOUR, TO BHEESHMA, SATYAVATI, AMBIKA AND AMBALIKA."



"AND PANDU SENT A PORTION TO VIDURA ALSO. BHEESHMA THEN HEARD OF A BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER OF KING DEVAKA, BORN TO A SHOODRA WIFE. HE BROUGHT HER AND MARRIED HER TO VIDURA.



THUS DID THE WISE AND TRUTHFUL BHEESHMA UPHOLD HIS VOW AND YET KEEP THE KURU LINE ALIVE BY OBTAINING SONS FOR HIS STEP-BROTHER'S WIDOWS AND, IN DUE COURSE, VIRTUOUS WIVES FOR THOSE SONS.



AND THUS ENDS THE SECOND SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S NARRATION—DURING THE INTERVALS IN THE SACRIFICIAL RITES OF JANAMEJAYA'S SARPA SATRA—OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARATA.

MAHABHARATA-3

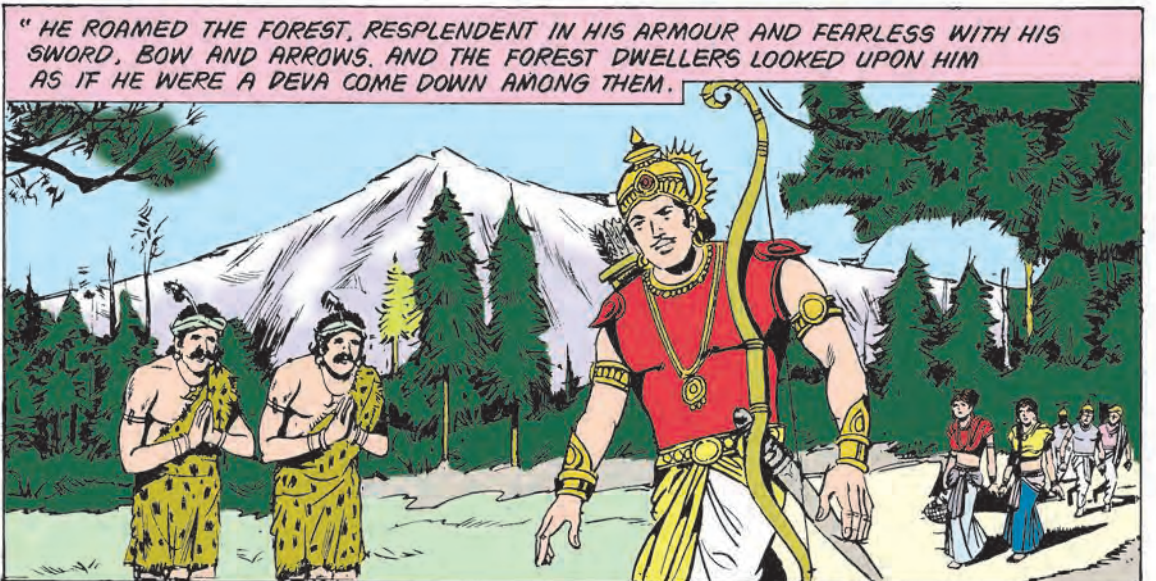
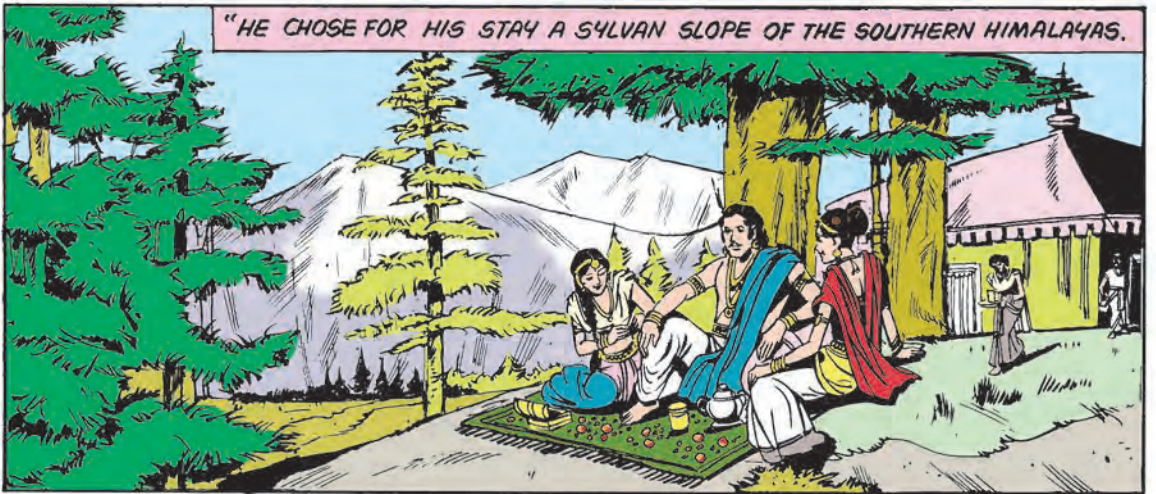
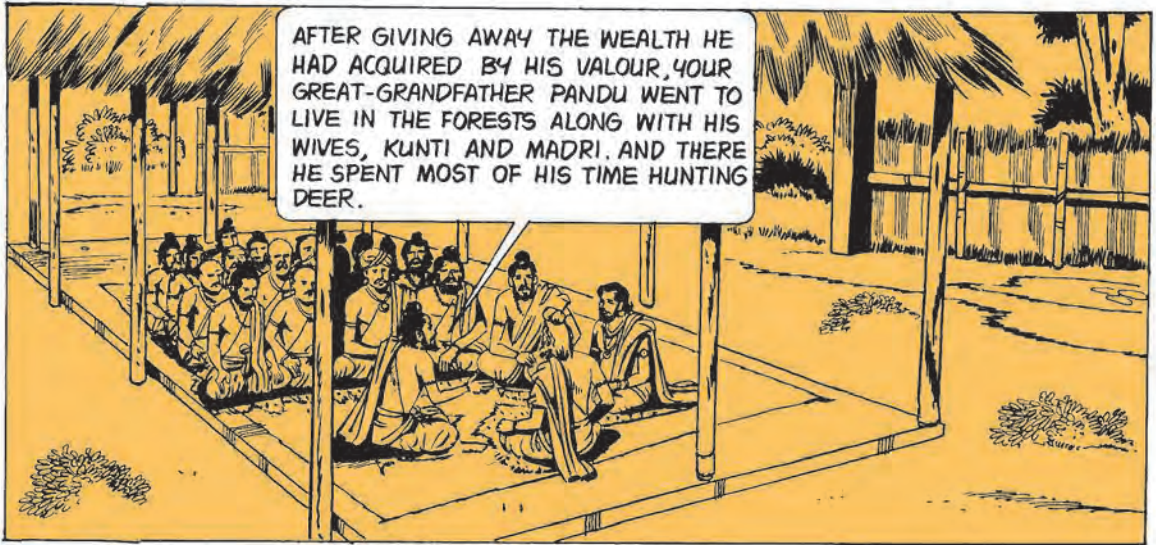
The Advent of the Kuru Princes

VEDA VYASA'S EPIC ON THE BHARATA RACE WAS FIRST RECITED IN PUBLIC, BY HIS DISCIPLE VAISHAMPAYANA, AT THE BEHEST OF THE AGELESS SEER VYASA HIMSELF.

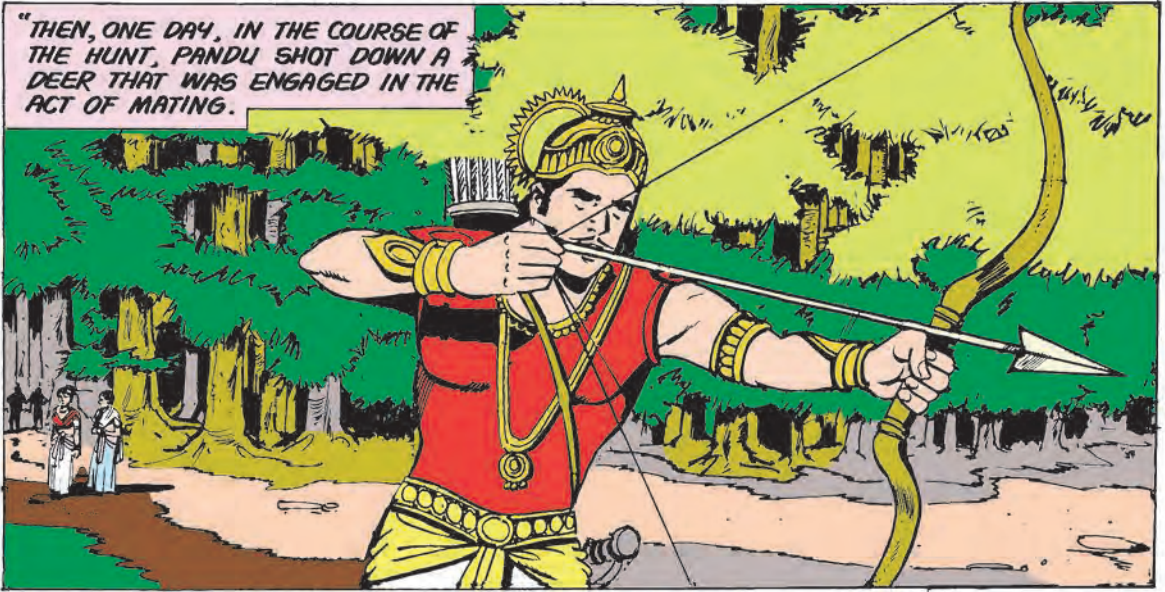
THE RECITAL TOOK PLACE IN THE AUGUST PRESENCE OF KING JANAMEJAYA—THE GREAT-GRANDSON OF THE GRANDSON OF VYASA—AND THE MANY LEARNED SAGES WHO HAD ASSEMBLED FOR JANAMEJAYA'S SARPA[®]SATRA*.

THE SECOND SESSION, OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL, DESCRIBED THE ROLES PLAYED BY BHEESHMA AND VYASA IN KEEPING THE KURU LINE ALIVE. IT ENDED WITH PANDU GIVING AWAY ALL THE WEALTH HE HAD ACQUIRED IN CONQUESTS TO BHEESHMA, SATYAVATI, AMBIKA, AMBALIKA AND VIDURA.





"THEN, ONE DAY, IN THE COURSE OF THE HUNT, PANDU SHOT DOWN A DEER THAT WAS ENGAGED IN THE ACT OF MATING."



"THE DYING DEER CURSED PANDU SAYING:

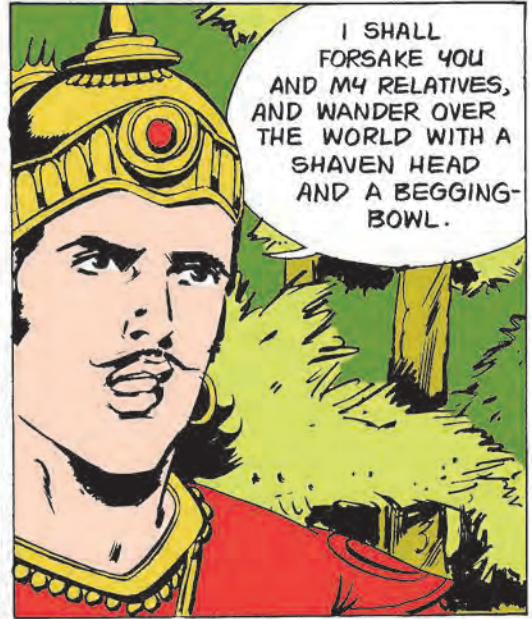
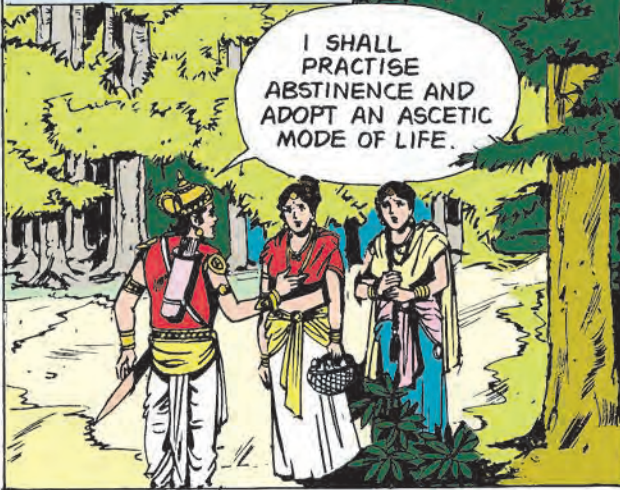
AS YOU
HAVE KILLED
ME AT SUCH A
TIME, THE SAME
FATE SHALL
BEFALL YOU.

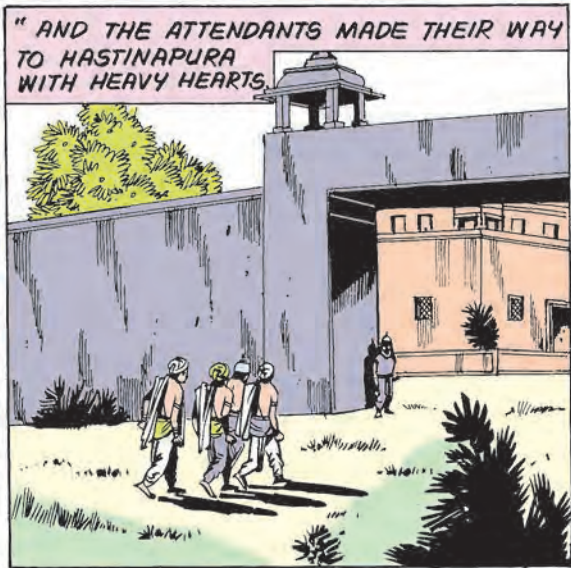
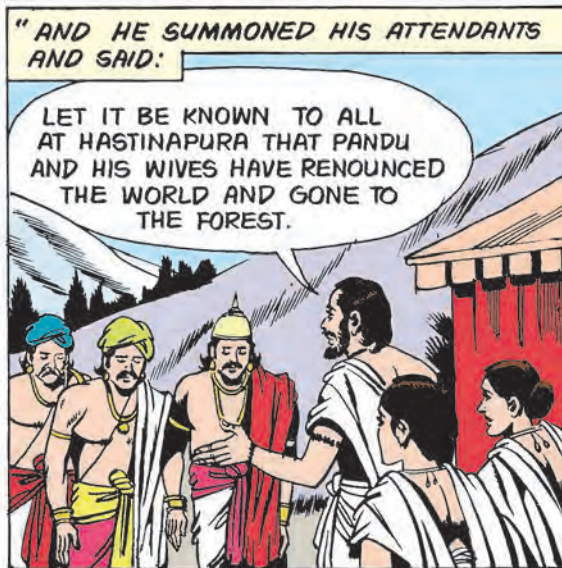
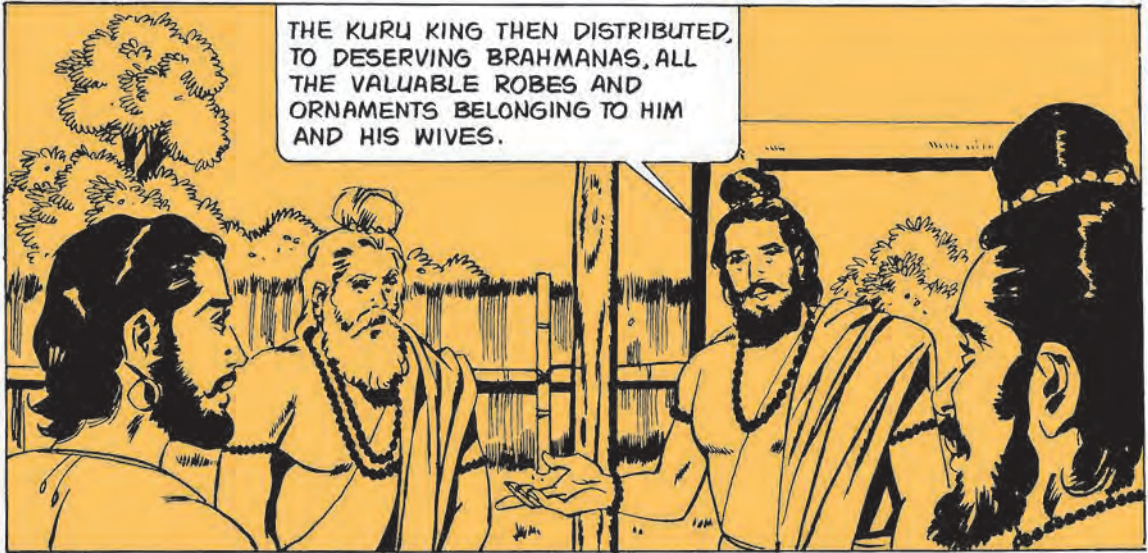


YOU SHALL DIE
THE MOMENT YOU
TOUCH YOUR WIFE
IN DESIRE.



"SHOCKED AND GRIEVED AT THE CURSE OF THE DYING DEER, PANDU DECIDED TO TURN HIS BACK ON THE WAYS OF THE WORLD. AND HE SAID TO HIS WIVES:





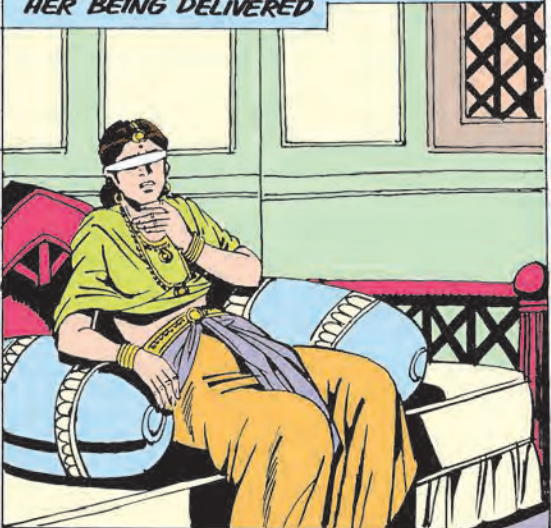
"MEANWHILE, ONE DAY, MY GURU VYASA CAME WEARY AND HUNGRY TO THE PALACE AT HASTINAPURA.



PLEASED BY GANDHARI'S HOSPITALITY, HE GRANTED HER THE BOON SHE DESIRED; A HUNDRED SONS EQUAL IN MIGHT TO DHRTARASHTRA.



"IN DUE COURSE, GANDHARI CONCEIVED. BUT TWO YEARS WENT BY, WITHOUT HER BEING DELIVERED



"AND SHE HEARD THAT A BRILLIANT SON WAS BORN TO KUNTI. THE SON WAS YUDHISHTHIRA.



TURNING DESPERATE AND RASH WITH IMPATIENCE AND ENVY, SHE STRUCK HERSELF WITH GREAT FORCE. AND SHE WAS DELIVERED OF A LUMP OF FLESH AS HARD AS AN IRON BALL.

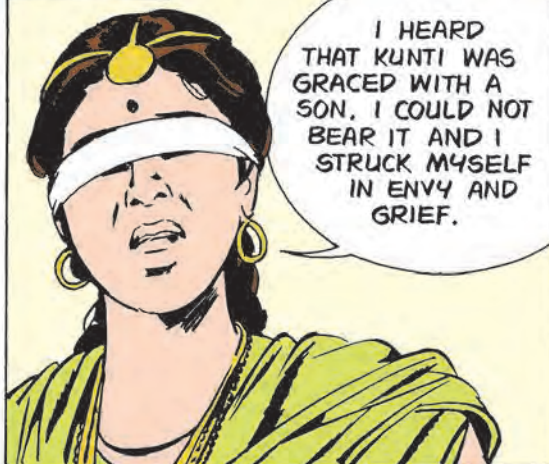


"WHEN SHE HAD DECIDED TO CAST IT OFF, MY GURU VYASA, DIVINING THE EVENT, APPEARED BEFORE HER AND SAID:



WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

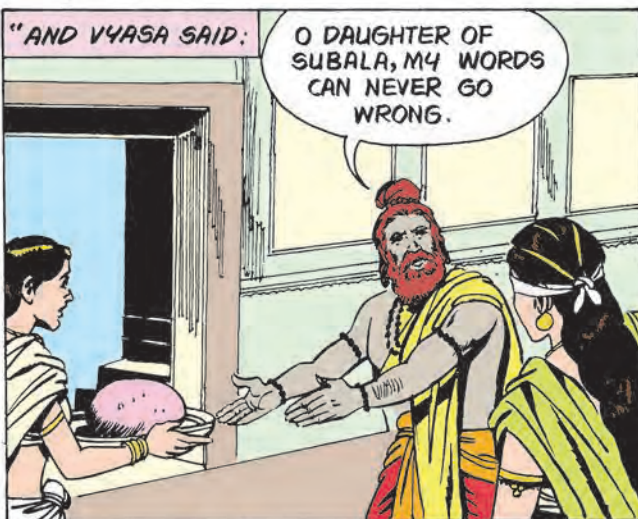
"WITHOUT HIDING THE TRUTH, SHE REPLIED:



I HEARD THAT KUNTI WAS GRACED WITH A SON. I COULD NOT BEAR IT AND I STRUCK MYSELF IN ENVY AND GRIEF.



O RISHI, A HUNDRED SONS WERE TO BE MINE. AND ALL I HAVE BROUGHT FORTH IS THIS LUMP OF FLESH!



"AND VYASA SAID:

O DAUGHTER OF SUBALA, MY WORDS CAN NEVER GO WRONG.



HAVE A HUNDRED POTS OF GHEE PLACED IN A SECRET SPOT AT ONCE.



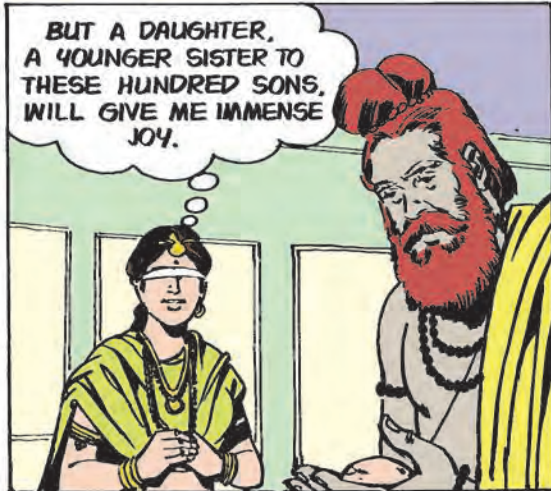
"MY GURU THEN SPRINKLED COLD WATER ON THE LUMP..."

"...AND BROKE IT INTO THUMB-SIZED PARTS. EACH PART WAS DEPOSITED BY A MIDWIFE INTO THE POT KEPT READY FOR IT. WHILE THIS WAS GOING ON, GANDHARI THOUGHT TO HERSELF:

BEYOND DOUBT I WILL HAVE A HUNDRED SONS BECAUSE THE MUNI HAS SAID SO.



BUT A DAUGHTER, A YOUNGER SISTER TO THESE HUNDRED SONS, WILL GIVE ME IMMENSE JOY.

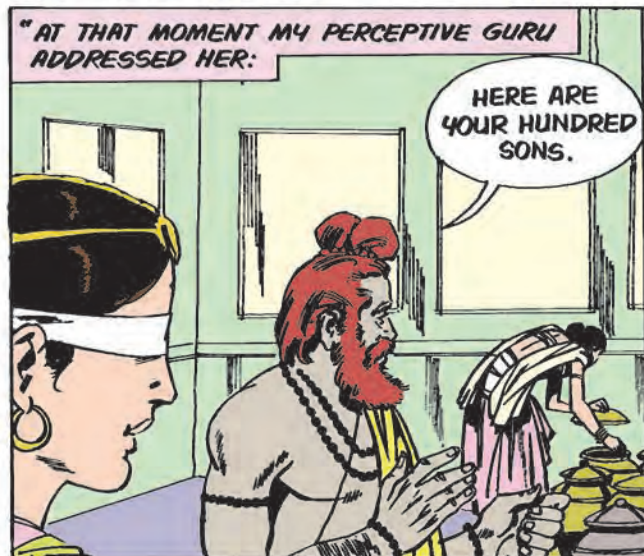


IF I HAVE BEEN VIRTUOUS, LET A DAUGHTER BE BORN TO ME.

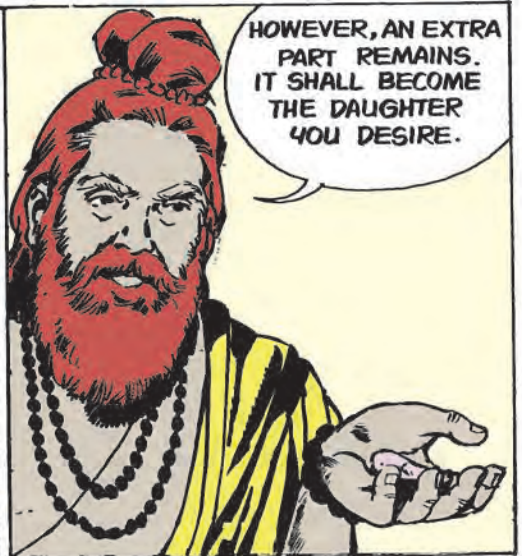


"AT THAT MOMENT MY PERCEPTIVE GURU ADDRESSED HER:

HERE ARE YOUR HUNDRED SONS.



HOWEVER, AN EXTRA PART REMAINS. IT SHALL BECOME THE DAUGHTER YOU DESIRE.



MY GURU DEPOSITED THAT LAST PART, TOO, IN A POT OF GHEE, AND LEFT FOR HIS ASCETIC ABODE IN THE HIMALAYAS.

IN DUE COURSE, DURYODHANA WAS BORN FROM ONE OF THOSE POTS. AND HE EMERGED, BRAYING LIKE A DONKEY.



"AND IN RESPONSE CAME THE CRIES OF JACKALS, VULTURES AND CROWS, WHILE STORMY WINDS AND BLAZING FIRES STALKED THE LAND.

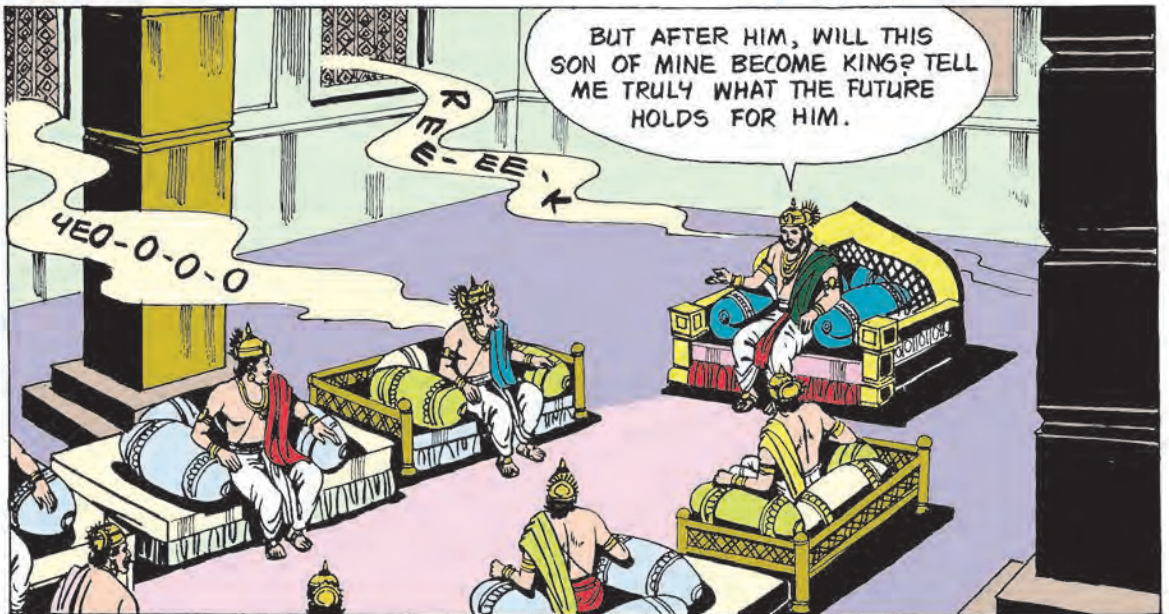


"GRIPPED BY FEAR, DHRITARASHTRA SUMMONED BHEESHMA, VIDURA, AND OTHER WISE MEN AND SAID:

BY VIRTUE OF HIS BIRTH, YUDHISHTHIRA THE FIRSTBORN PRINCE WILL RULE THE LAND; WHICH IS AS IT SHOULD BE.

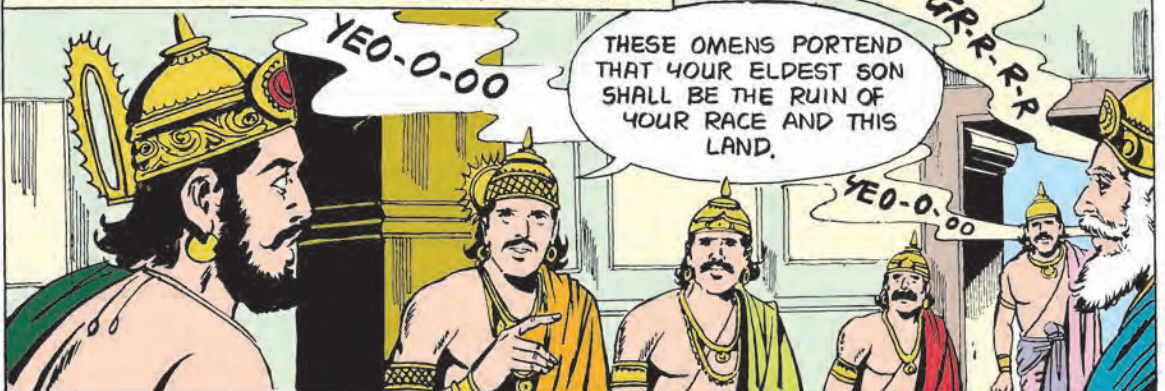


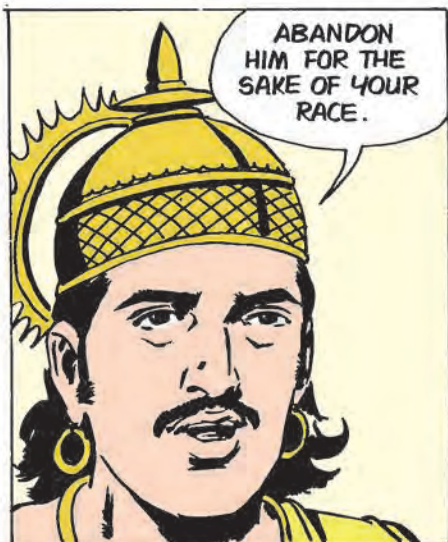
BUT AFTER HIM, WILL THIS SON OF MINE BECOME KING? TELL ME TRULY WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR HIM.



"EVEN AS DHRITARASHTRA SPOKE, THE AIR WAS RENT WITH THE WIERD HOWLS OF BEASTS OF PREY. MARKING THESE ILL OMENS, VIDURA SAID:

THESE OMENS PORTEND THAT YOUR ELDEST SON SHALL BE THE RUIN OF YOUR RACE AND THIS LAND.

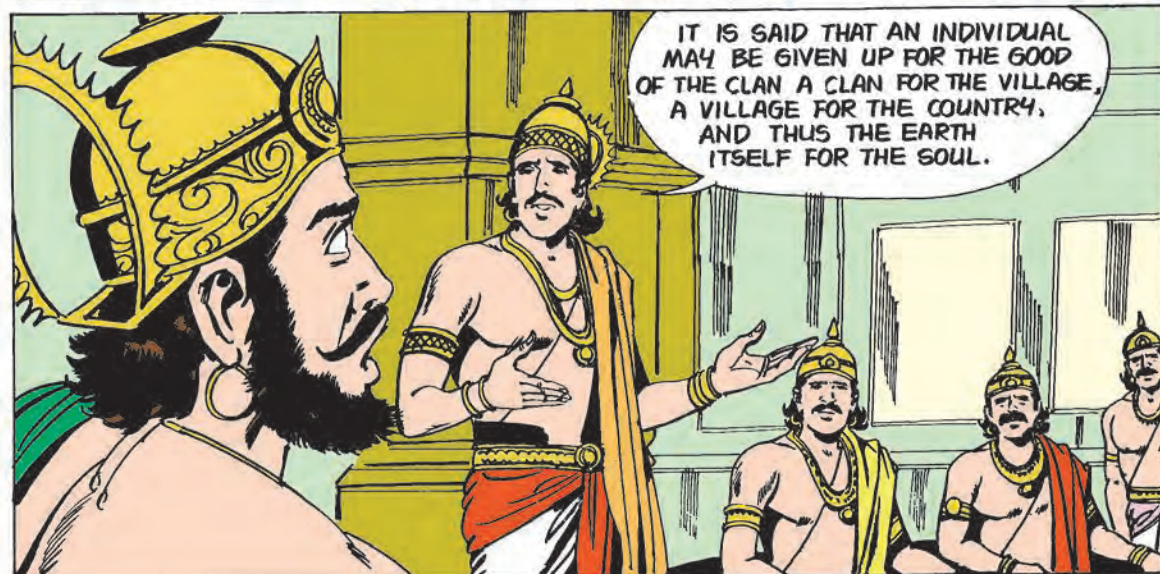




ABANDON HIM FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR RACE.



YOU WILL STILL HAVE NINETY-NINE SONS LEFT. FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR OWN RACE AND THE LAND, DISCARD THIS CHILD.



IT IS SAID THAT AN INDIVIDUAL MAY BE GIVEN UP FOR THE GOOD OF THE CLAN A CLAN FOR THE VILLAGE, A VILLAGE FOR THE COUNTRY, AND THUS THE EARTH ITSELF FOR THE SOUL.



BUT LOVE FOR HIS SON DID NOT LET DHRTARASHTRA HEED THE ADVICE.

SOON AFTER THE BIRTH OF DURYODHANA WAS BORN YUJITSU, THE SON OF DHRTARASHTRA AND A WOMAN OF THE VAISHYA CASTE.

THEN CAME THE REMAINING NINETY-NINE SONS OF GANDHARI AND THE DAUGHTER DUHSHALA.

O SAGE, YOU HAVE NARRATED IN DETAIL ALL ABOUT THE MARVELLOUS BIRTH OF THE OFFSPRING OF DHRTARASHTRA.

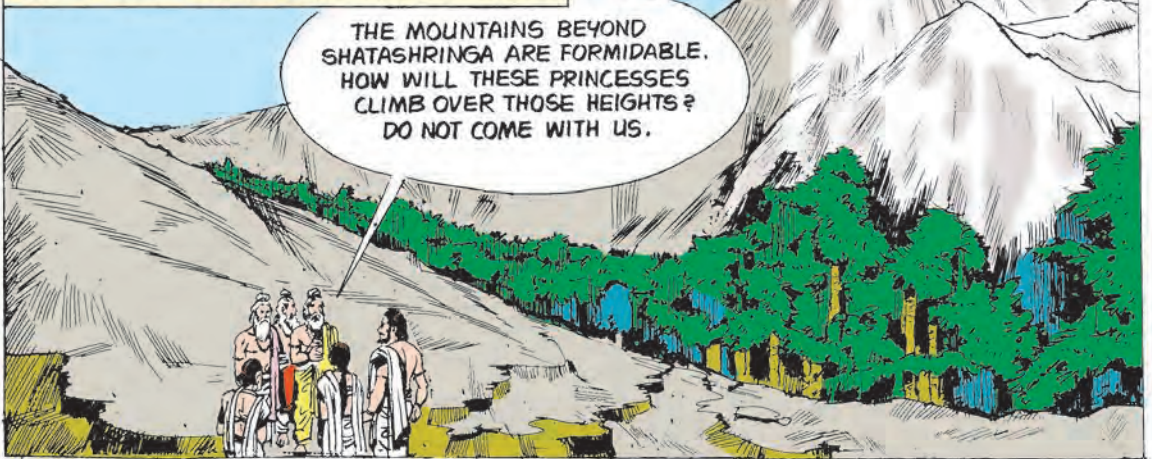
YOU ALSO SPOKE OF YUDHISHTHIRA, THE SON BORN TO KUNTI. HOW DID THIS HAPPEN WHEN PANDU WAS UNDER THE CURSE OF THE DEER? AND TELL ME ALSO OF THE BIRTH OF MY OTHER GREAT-GRAND-UNCLES AND MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER ARJUNA.

THIS IS HOW IT CAME TO PASS. WITH INTENTIONS OF RENOUNCING THE WORLD, PANDU, ALONG WITH HIS WIVES, TRAVERSED THE MOUNTAINOUS REALMS OF CHAITRA-RATHA AND BEYOND, AND ARRIVED ON THE HIMALAYAS AT GANDHAMADANA.

FROM GANDHAMADANA THEY PROCEEDED TO THE LAKE OF INDRADYUMNA, CROSSED THE MOUNTAINS THERE AND CAME TO THE SHATASHRINGA RANGE WHERE THEY STAYED.

"PANDU SOON BECAME A FAVOURITE OF THE HOLY MEN AT SHATASHRINGA. ONCE WHEN THEY WERE ABOUT TO SET OUT FOR THE ABODE OF BRAHMAN, PANDU WITH HIS WIVES JOINED THEM. THEN THE RISHIS SAID:

THE MOUNTAINS BEYOND SHATASHRINGA ARE FORMIDABLE. HOW WILL THESE PRINCESSES CLIMB OVER THOSE HEIGHTS? DO NOT COME WITH US.



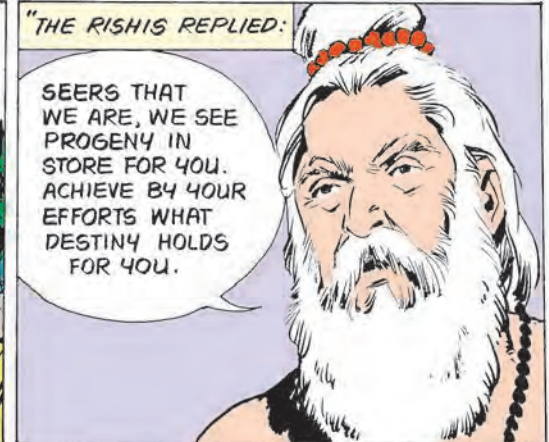
"SO PANDU SAID:

THEN YOU TELL ME, RECALLING THE EVENTS THAT LED TO MY BIRTH, MAY I OBTAIN CHILDREN IN THE SAME MANNER?



"THE RISHIS REPLIED:

SEERS THAT WE ARE, WE SEE PROGENY IN STORE FOR YOU. ACHIEVE BY YOUR EFFORTS WHAT DESTINY HOLDS FOR YOU.

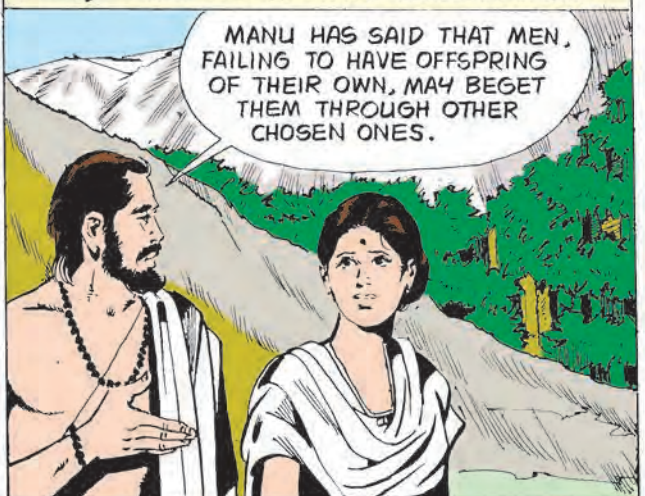


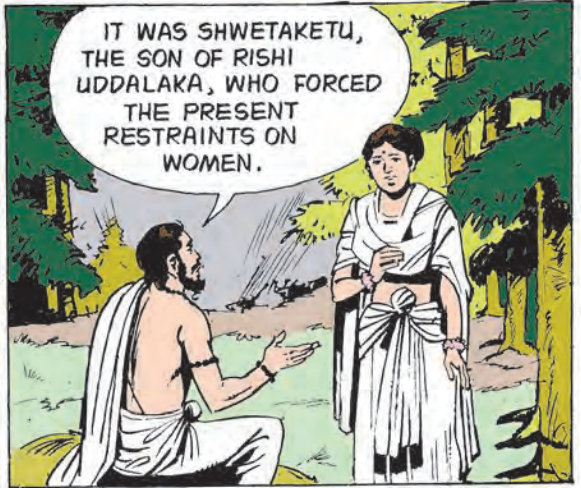
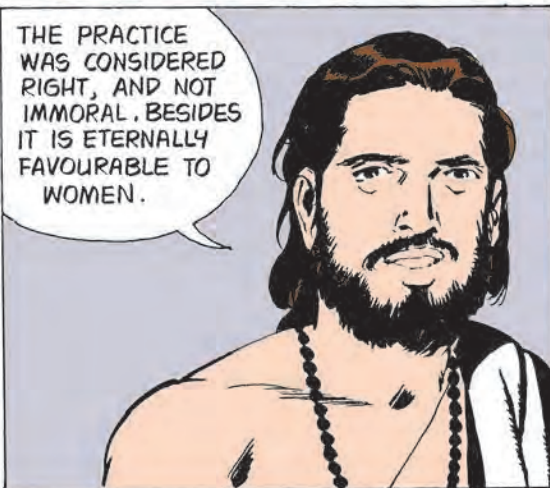
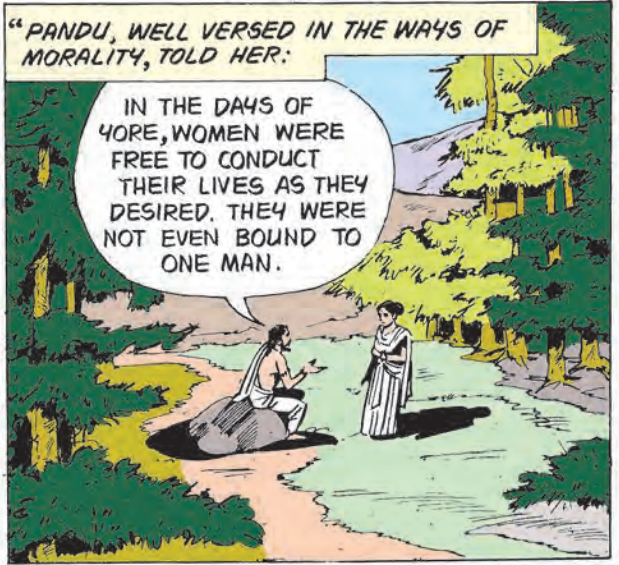
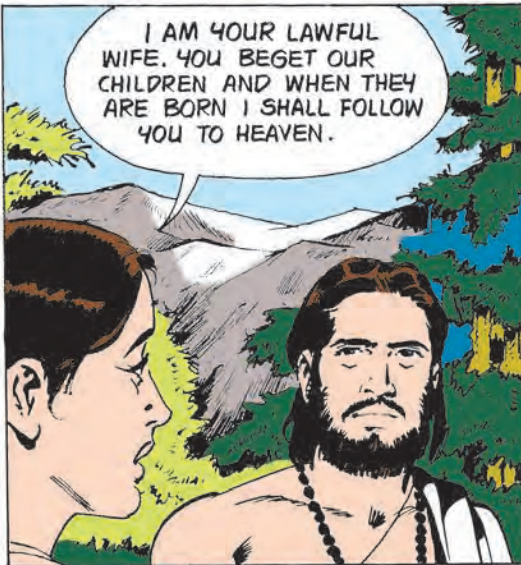
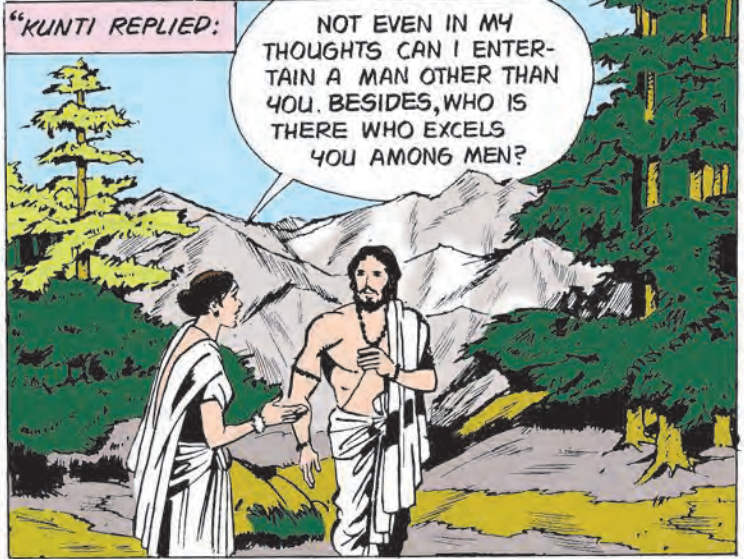
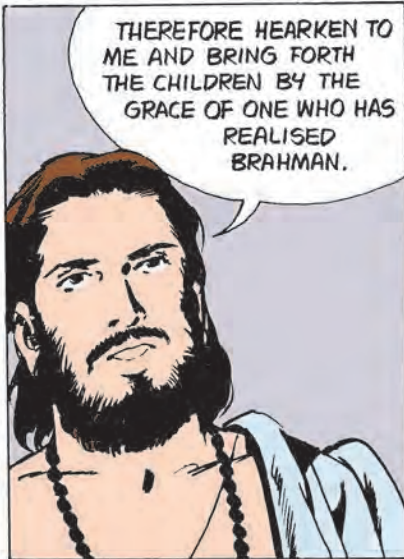
DO WHAT YOU OUGHT TO DO. YOU SHALL BE REWARDED.

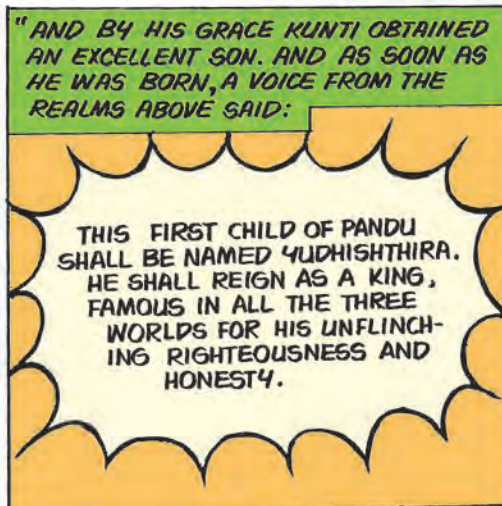
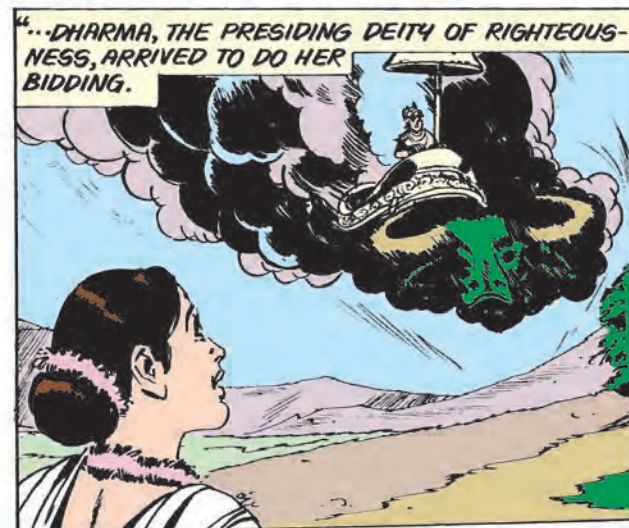
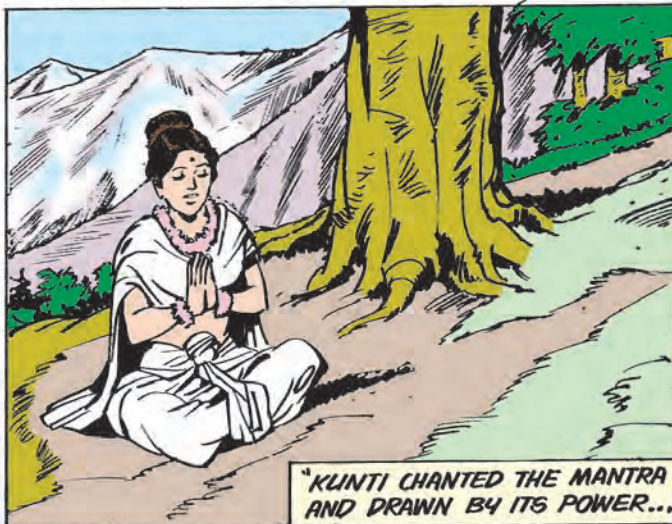
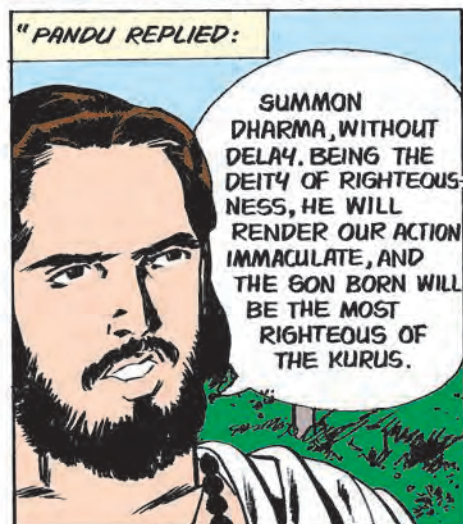
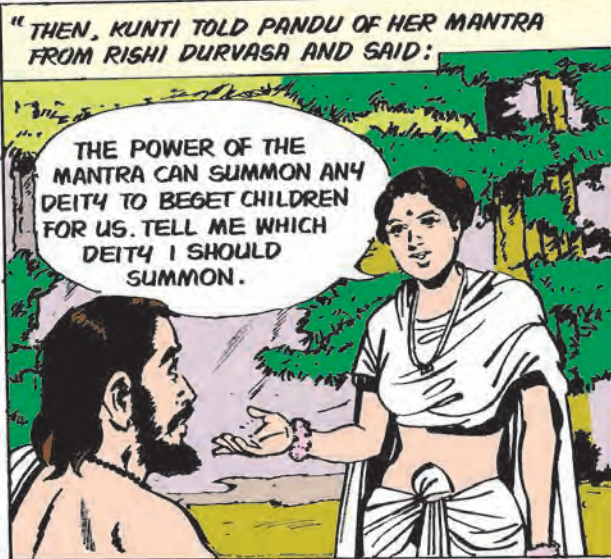
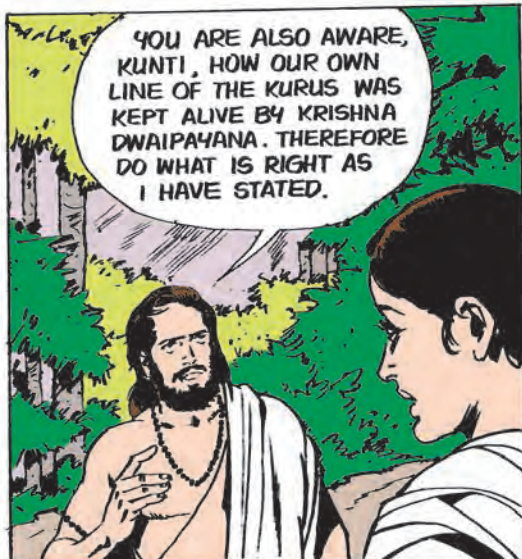


"AFTER LISTENING TO THE WORDS OF THE RISHIS AND EVER AWARE OF THE CURSE OF THE DEER, PANDU CALLED KUNTI ASIDE AND SAID:

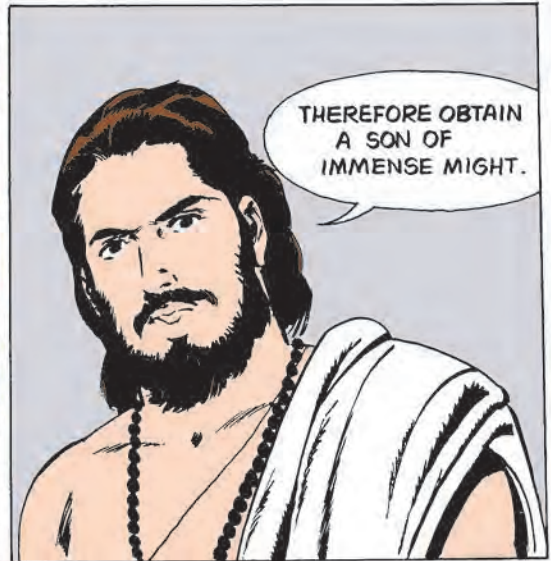
MANU HAS SAID THAT MEN, FAILING TO HAVE OFFSPRING OF THEIR OWN, MAY BEGET THEM THROUGH OTHER CHOSEN ONES.







"AFTER THE BIRTH OF YUDHISHTHIRA, PANDU SAID TO KUNTI:



"ACCORDINGLY, KUNTI INVOKED VAYU AND THAT POWERFUL DEITY OF WIND ARRIVED AND SAID:



"SMILING MODESTLY, KUNTI REPLIED:



"AND THEN WAS BORN BHEEMA OF MATCHLESS STRENGTH AND VALOUR, AND A VOICE FROM THE REALMS ABOVE SAID:



"SOON AFTER HIS BIRTH, O MONARCH, BHEEMA WAS SLEEPING IN KUNTI'S LAP...



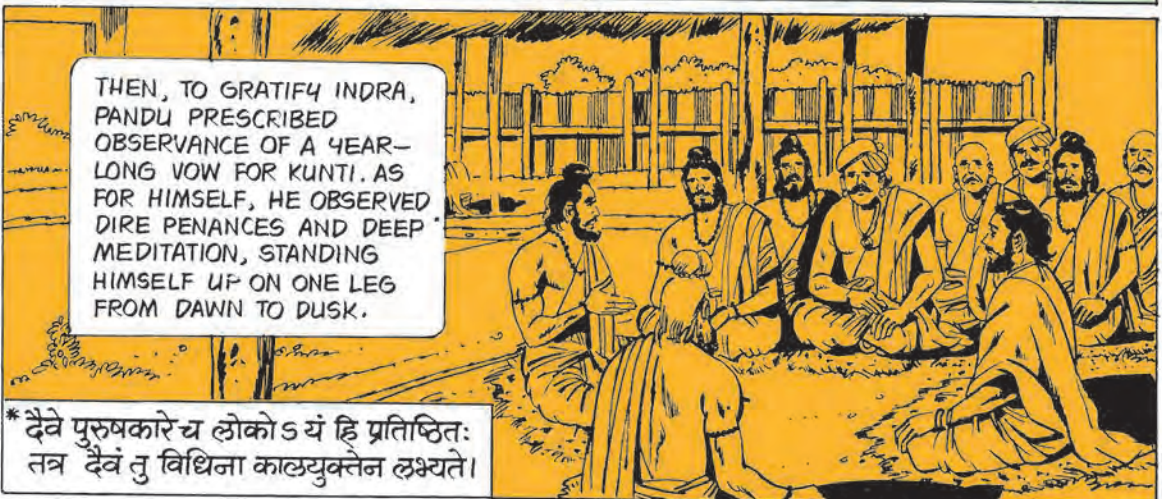
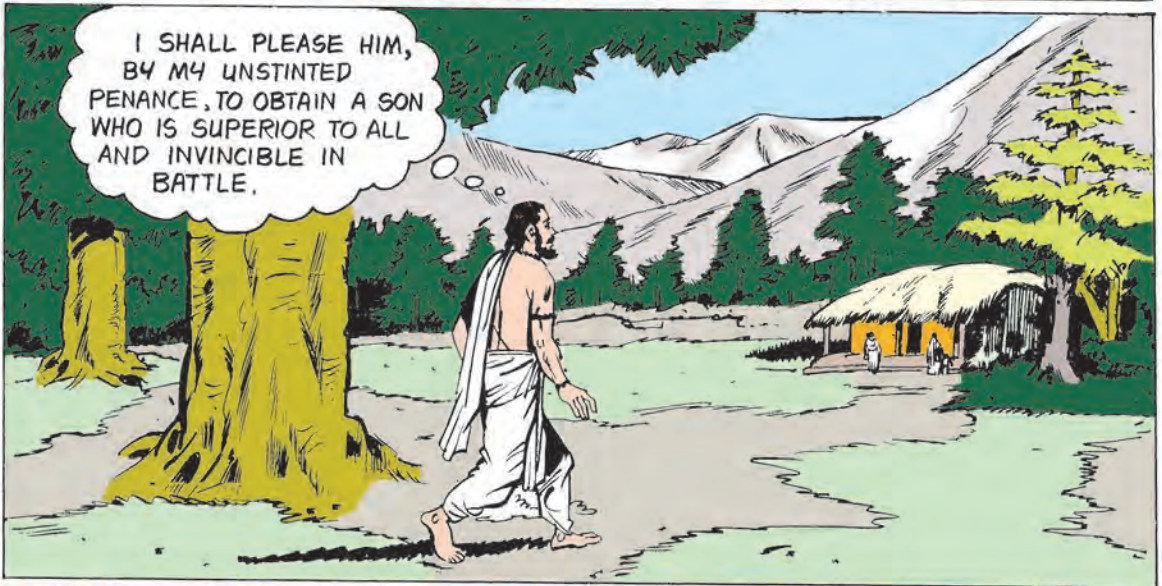
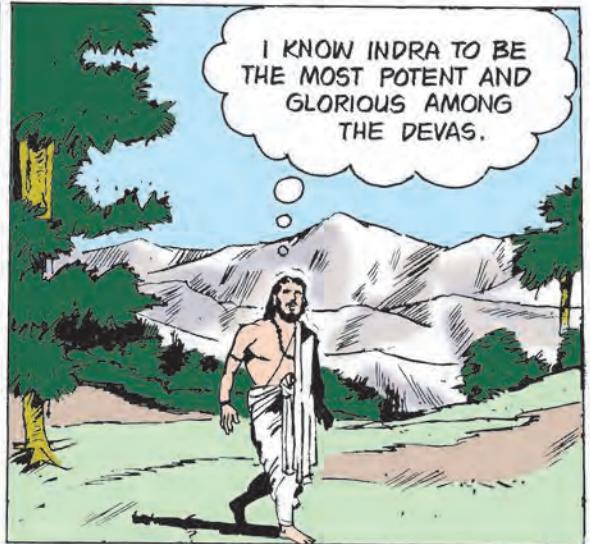
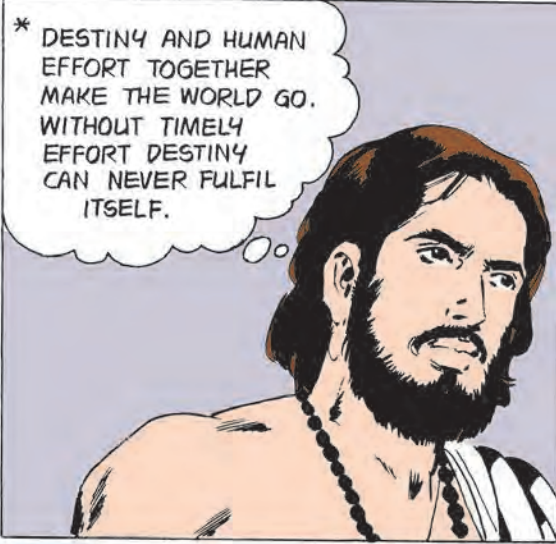
"...WHEN, STARTLED BY THE GROWL OF A TIGER, SHE SUDDENLY ROSE AND BHEEMA WAS THROWN OFF.

"THE INFANT FELL ON A ROCK, WHICH HIS BODY, HARD AS AGATE, BROKE INTO SMITHEREENS.

AND AS IT HAPPENED, BHEEMA WAS BORN ON THE SAME DAY AS DURYODHANA.

"AFTER THE BIRTH OF BHEEMA, PANDU REFLECTED:

HOW SHALL I OBTAIN A SON WHO WILL WIN THE ADMIRATION OF THE WHOLE WORLD?



* दैवे पुरुषकारे च लोको ऽयं हि प्रतिष्ठितः
तत्र देवं तु विधिना कालयुक्तेन लभ्यते।

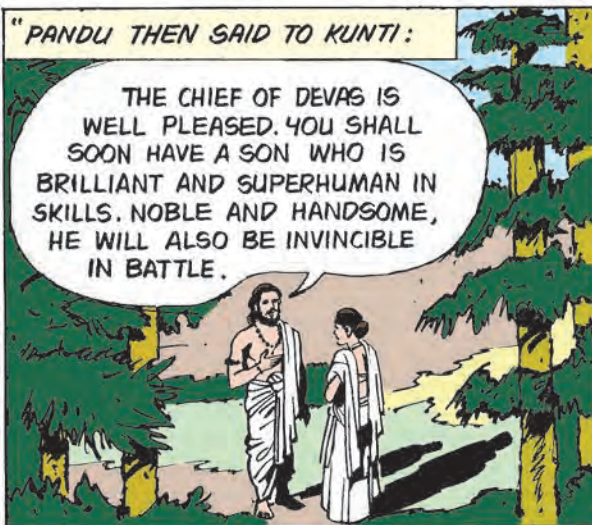
"WHEN MUCH TIME HAD ELAPSED, INDRA CAME TO PANDU AND SAID:

I SHALL GIVE YOU A SON WHO WILL BE A FRIEND TO THE VIRTUOUS AND A DESTROYER TO HIS FOES. HE SHALL BE FAMOUS IN ALL THE THREE WORLDS.

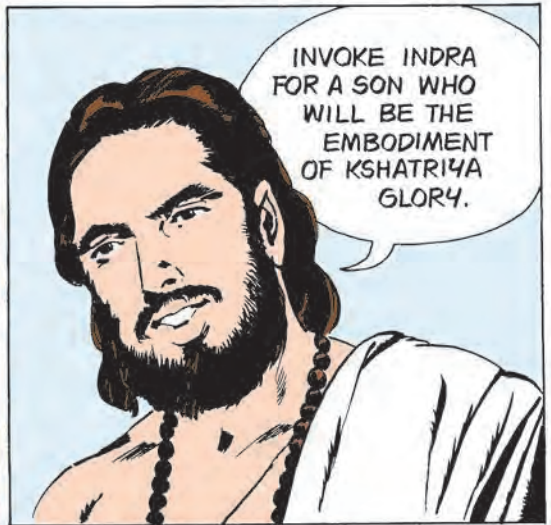


"PANDU THEN SAID TO KUNTI:

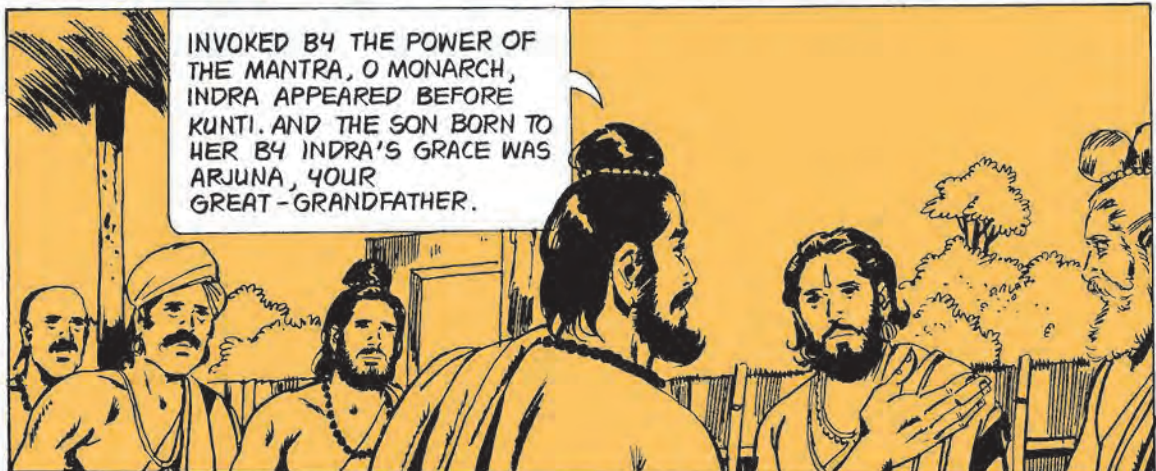
THE CHIEF OF DEVAS IS WELL PLEASED. YOU SHALL SOON HAVE A SON WHO IS BRILLIANT AND SUPERHUMAN IN SKILLS. NOBLE AND HANDSOME, HE WILL ALSO BE INVINCIBLE IN BATTLE.



INVOKE INDRA FOR A SON WHO WILL BE THE EMBODIMENT OF KSHATRIYA GLORY.



INVOKED BY THE POWER OF THE MANTRA, O MONARCH, INDRA APPEARED BEFORE KUNTI. AND THE SON BORN TO HER BY INDRA'S GRACE WAS ARJUNA, YOUR GREAT-GRANDFATHER.



"AND AS SOON AS THE CHILD WAS BORN, THE EARTH AND THE SKY RESOUNDED WITH A VOICE FROM THE REALMS ABOVE WHICH ADDRESSED KUNTI THUS IN LOUD, CLEAR TONES:

THIS INVINCIBLE CHILD WILL MAKE YOU FAMOUS.

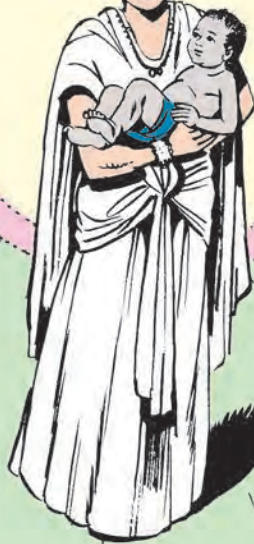
IN VALOUR HE WILL EQUAL VISHNU, SHIVA AND PARASHURAMA.

HIS MIGHT WILL ONE DAY SET THE KHANDAVA FOREST ABLAZE AND GRATIFY AGNI WITH THE FAT OF THE CREATURES IN IT.

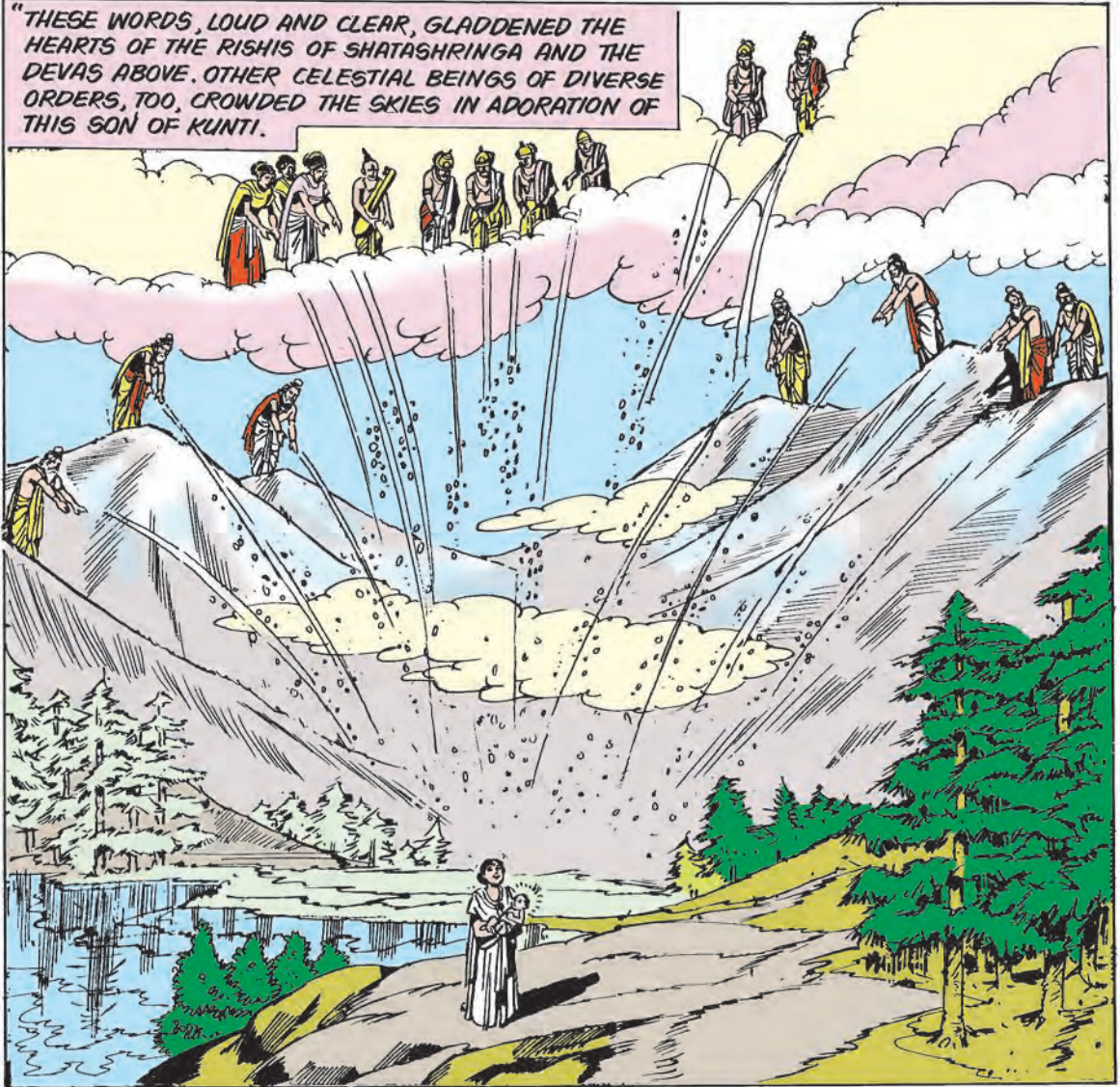
HE WILL WIN THE ADMIRATION OF SHIVA IN COMBAT AND WILL THEREBY OBTAIN THE PASHUPATA WEAPON FROM HIM.

HE WILL, AT THE BEHEST OF INDRA, ANNIHILATE THE NIVATAKAVACHAS, FOES OF THE DEVAS.

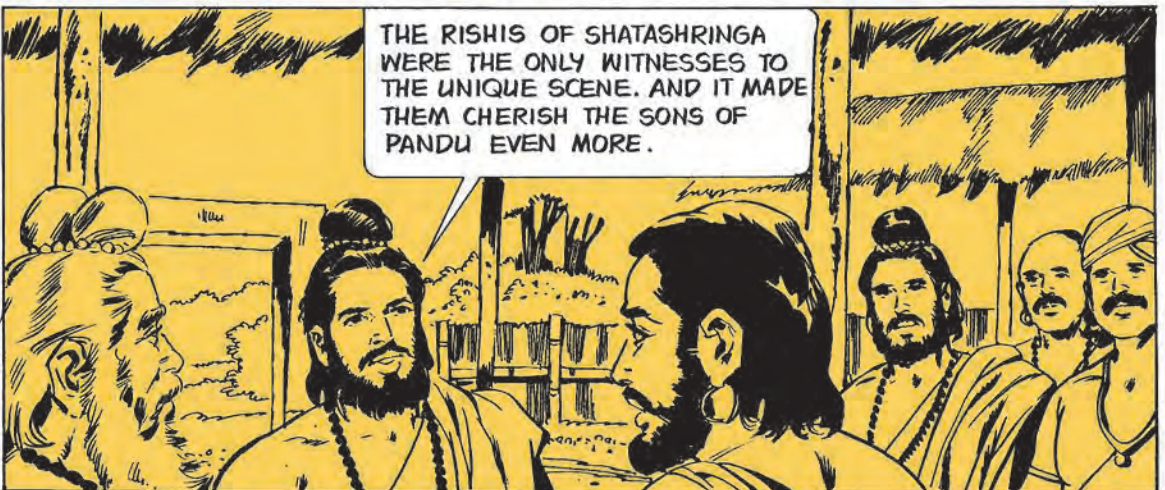
HE WILL ACQUIRE ALL THE MYSTERIOUS MISSILES AND RESTORE THE GLORY OF THE KURUS.



"THESE WORDS, LOUD AND CLEAR, GLADDENED THE HEARTS OF THE RISHIS OF SHATASHRINGA AND THE DEVAS ABOVE. OTHER CELESTIAL BEINGS OF DIVERSE ORDERS, TOO, CROWDED THE SKIES IN ADORATION OF THIS SON OF KUNTI.

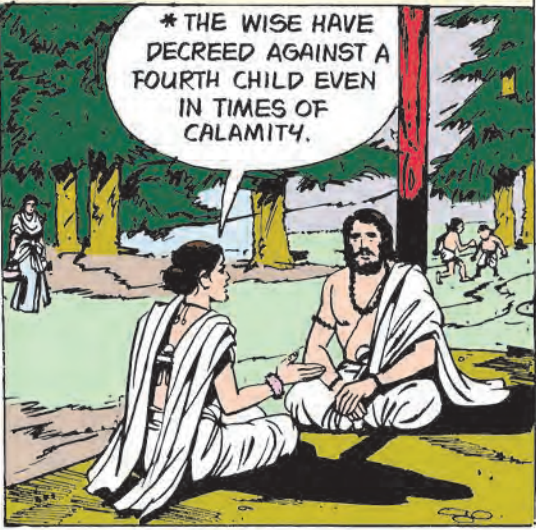


THE RISHIS OF SHATASHRINGA WERE THE ONLY WITNESSES TO THE UNIQUE SCENE. AND IT MADE THEM CHERISH THE SONS OF PANDU EVEN MORE.

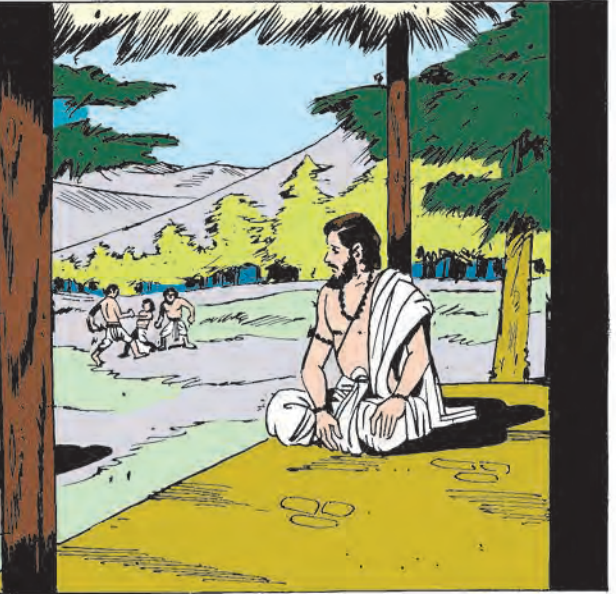
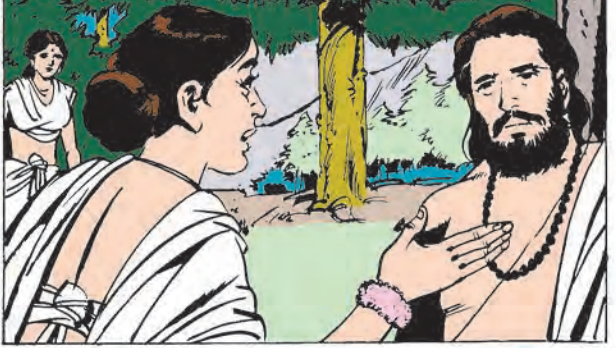


"WHEN PANDU, EAGER FOR MORE CHILDREN, SPOKE TO KUNTI AGAIN, SHE REPLIED:

* THE WISE HAVE
DECREED AGAINST A
FOURTH CHILD EVEN
IN TIMES OF
CALAMITY.



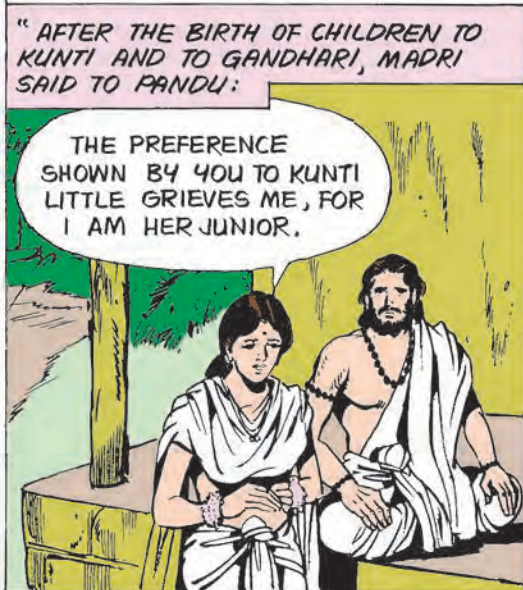
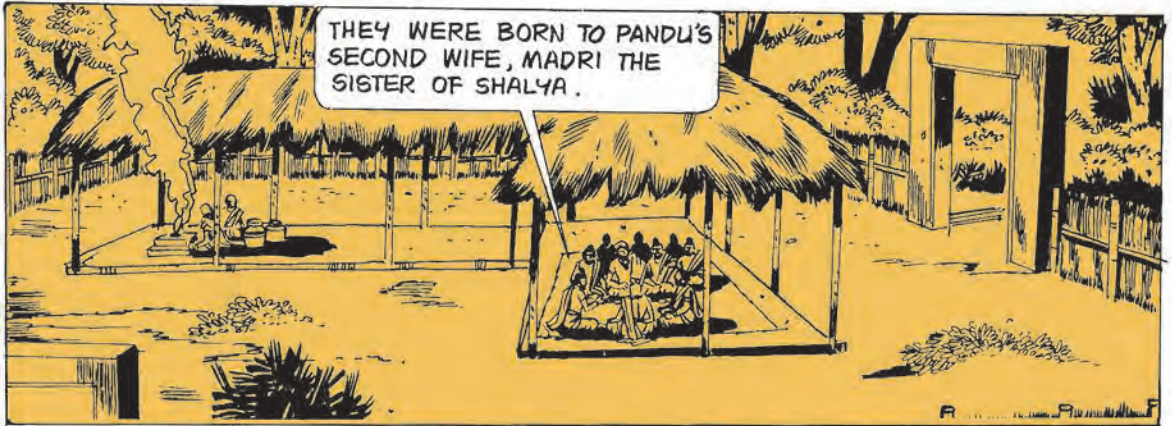
THOUGH YOU KNOW
WHAT IS ORDAINED IN THE
SHASTRAS, WHY DO YOU IN
YOUR EAGERNESS FOR
OFFSPRING ASK ME
TO DEViate?

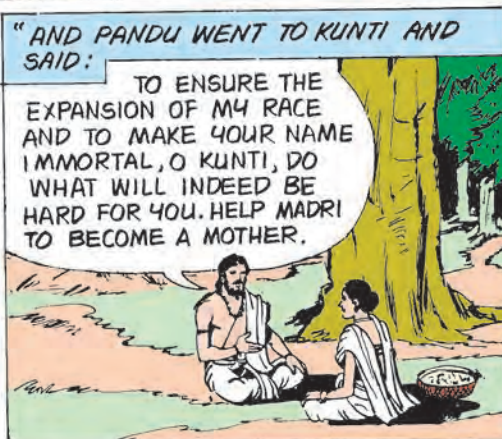
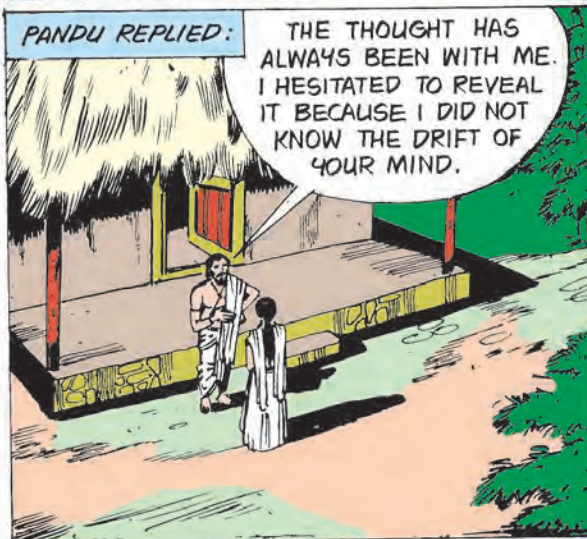


HOW THEN WERE MY
ANCESTORS THE TWINS
NAKULA AND SAHADEVA
BORN, O SAGE?



* नातश्चतुर्थं प्रसवमापत्स्वपि वदन्त्युत।





"AND AS SOON AS THEY WERE BORN, A VOICE FROM THE REALMS ABOVE SAID:

IN VIGOUR
AND BEAUTY
THE TWINS
SHALL EXCEL
ALL.

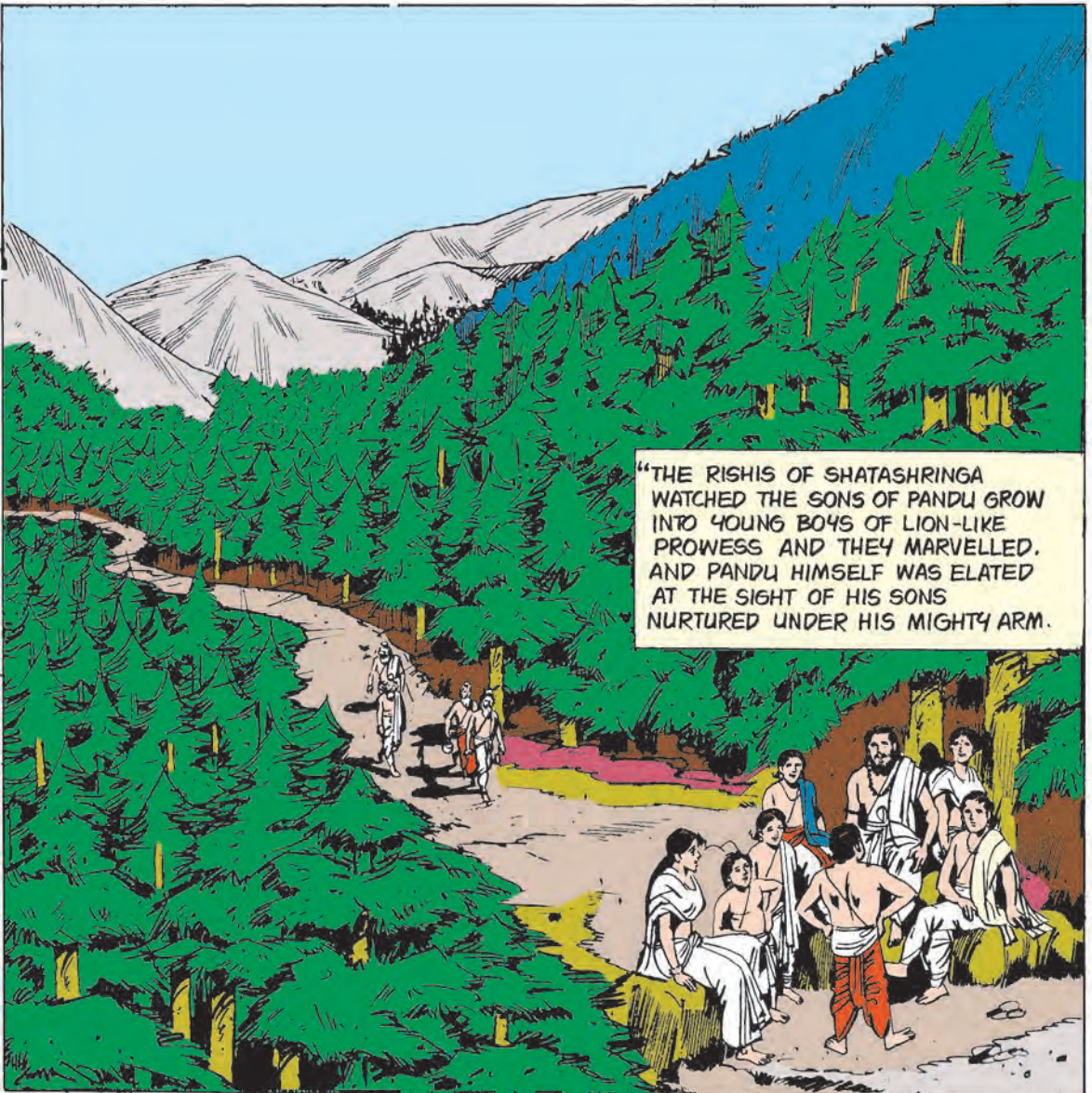
"AFTER THEIR BIRTH, PANDU ONCE AGAIN SPOKE TO KUNTI ON BEHALF OF MADRI. BUT KUNTI REPLIED:

USING THE
MANTRA ONCE,
SHE HAS BROUGHT
FORTH TWO SONS.

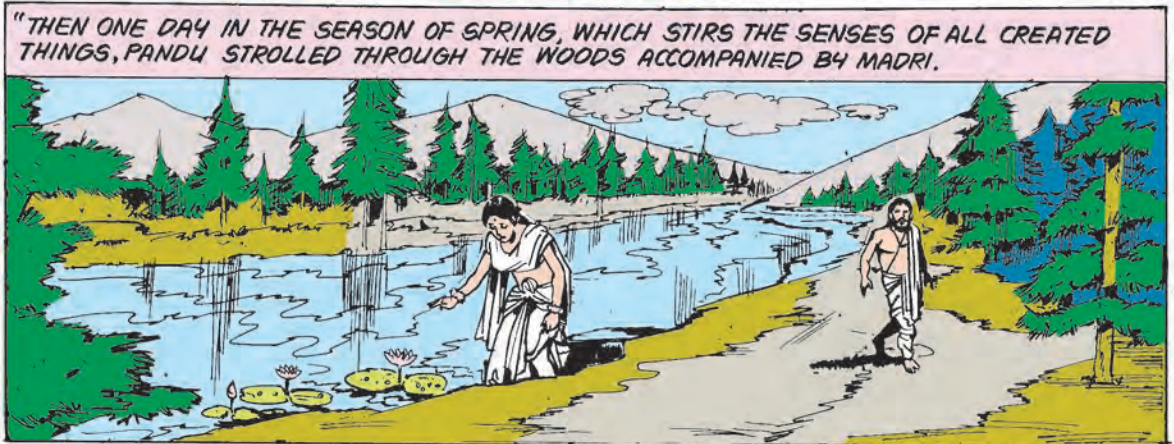
ARTLESS THAT I WAS,
I DID NOT THINK OF
INVOKING THE TWINS
FOR TWIN CHILDREN.

HER STEALTHY
WAYS CAUSE ME
ANXIETY. THEREFORE
DO NOT COMMAND
ME FURTHER.

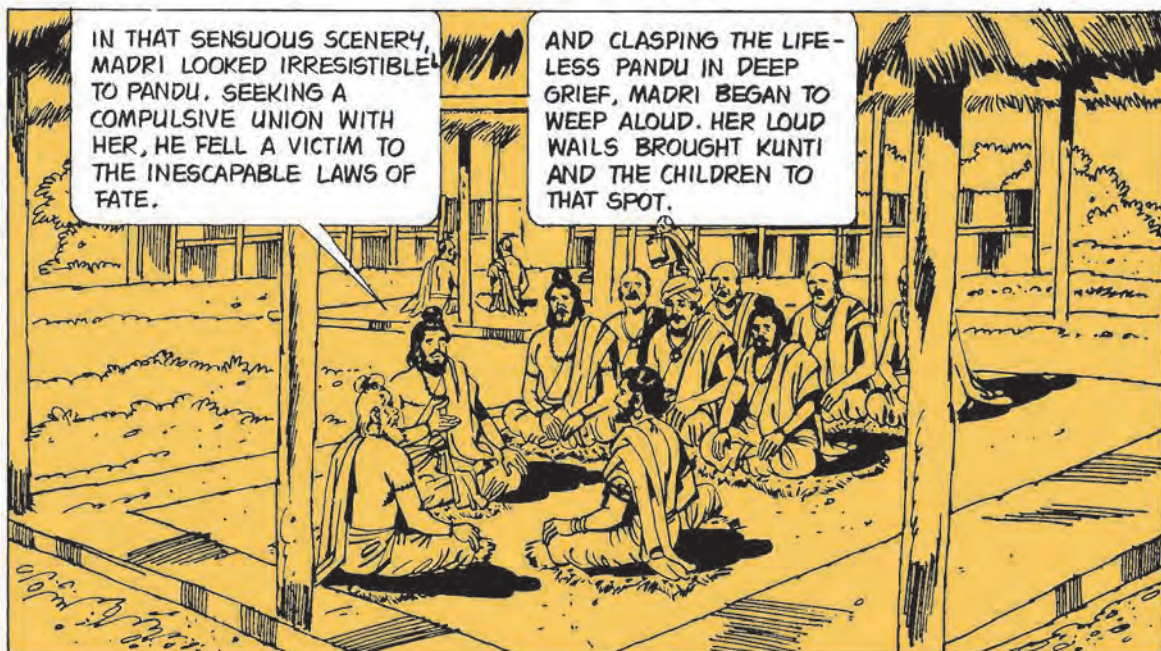
PANDU LET THE MATTER REST.
THEN THE RISHIS OF SHATASHRINGA
CONDUCTED THE RITES OF
INITIATION OF THE FIVE CHILDREN
AND CEREMONIALLY NAMED THEM,
YUDHISHTHIRA, BHEEMA, ARJUNA,
NAKULA AND SAHADEVA.

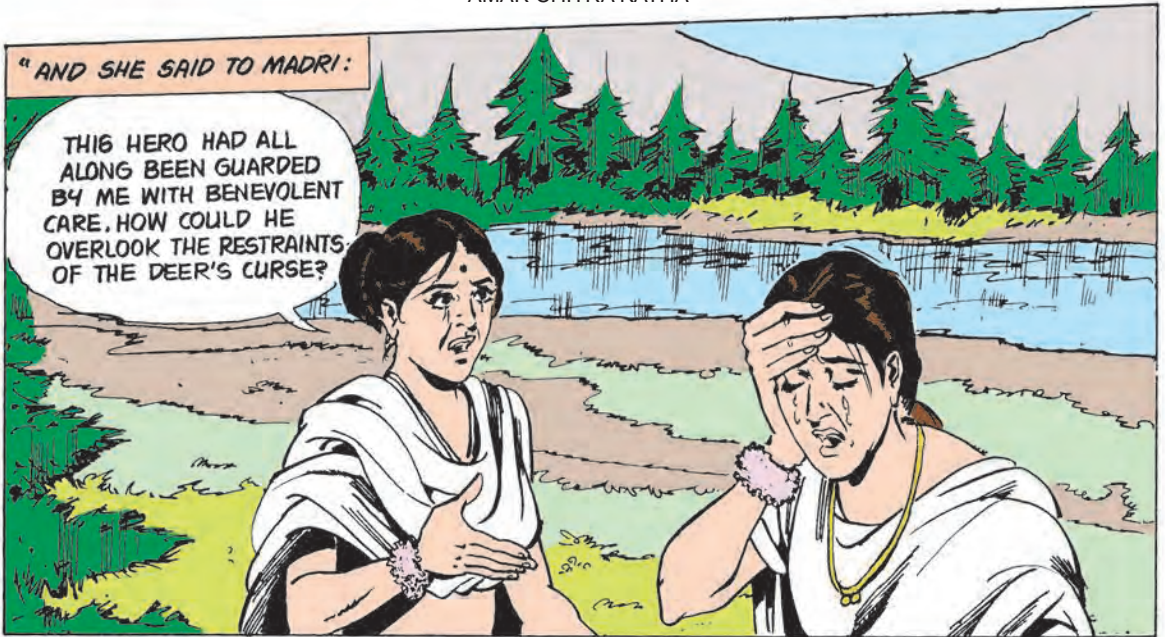


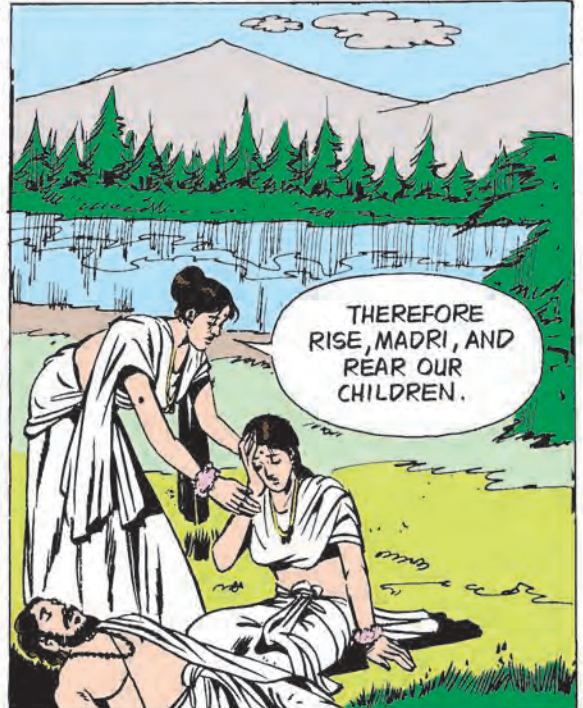
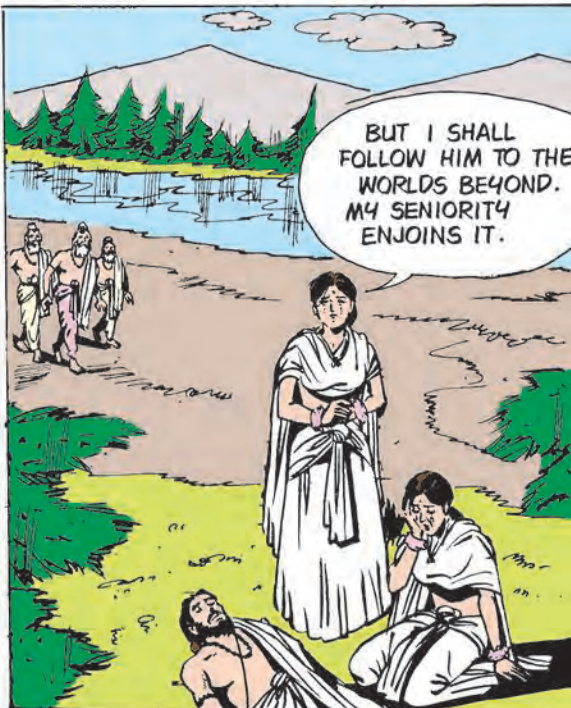
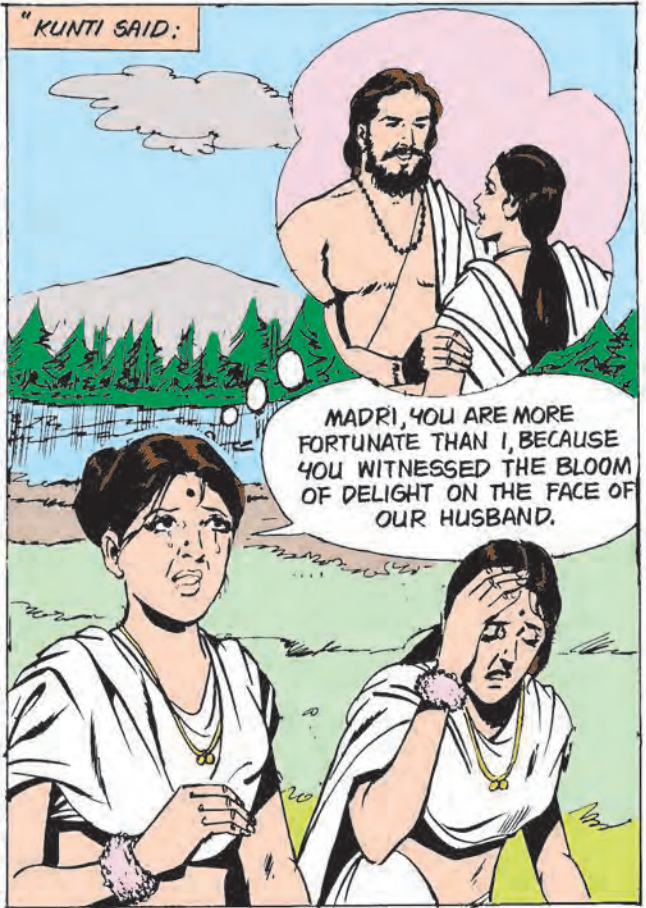
"THE RISHIS OF SHATASHRINGA
WATCHED THE SONS OF PANDU GROW
INTO YOUNG BOYS OF LION-LIKE
PROWESS AND THEY MARVELLED.
AND PANDU HIMSELF WAS ELATED
AT THE SIGHT OF HIS SONS
NURTURED UNDER HIS MIGHTY ARM.

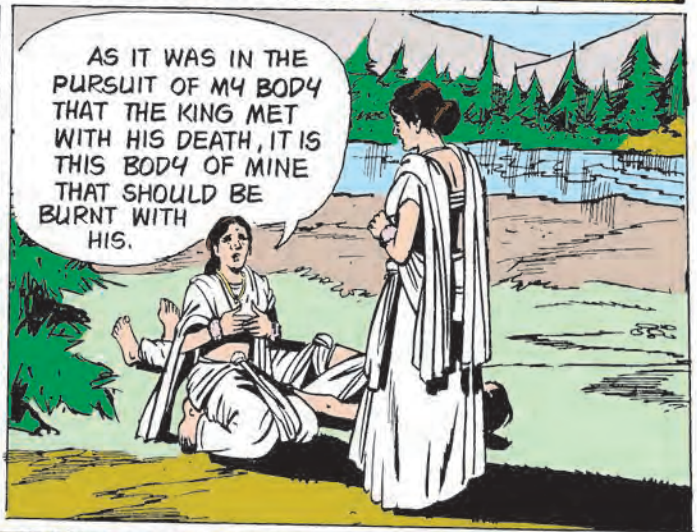
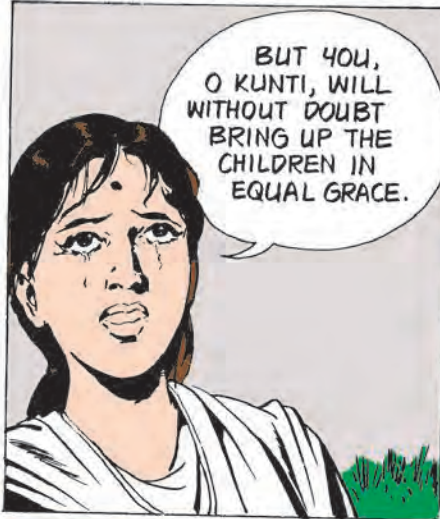
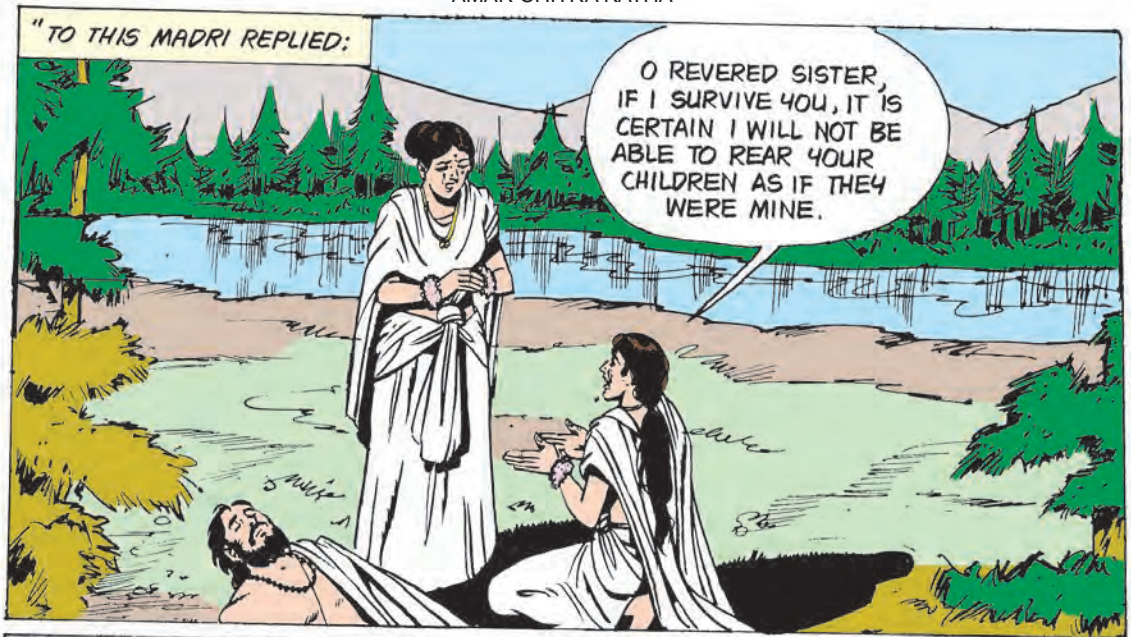


"THEN ONE DAY IN THE SEASON OF SPRING, WHICH STIRS THE SENSES OF ALL CREATED
THINGS, PANDU STROLLED THROUGH THE WOODS ACCOMPANIED BY MADRI.









"THE RISHIS OF SHATASHRINGA, WITNESSING THE DEATH OF PANDU, CONFERRED AMONGST THEMSELVES AND SAID:

THE WORTHY KING PANDU
HAD COME HERE AND HAD SOUGHT
TO LIVE THE LIFE OF A RECLUSE WITH
US. IT IS OUR DUTY TO LEAD HIS WIFE
AND CHILDREN BACK TO HIS
KINGDOM.



"THEN, TO ENTRUST THE SONS OF PANDU TO
BHEESHMA AND DHRITARASHTRA, THE RISHIS
SET OUT FOR HASTINAPURA WITH KUNTI,
THE CHILDREN AND THE CHARRED REMAINS OF
PANDU AND MADRI.



AND THUS ENDS THE THIRD SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF
VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMORTAL ITIHASA,
THE MAHABHARATA.